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SPIRITUALISING SCRIPTURE  
THE  
*CONFESSIONS OF A MILLENARIAN*

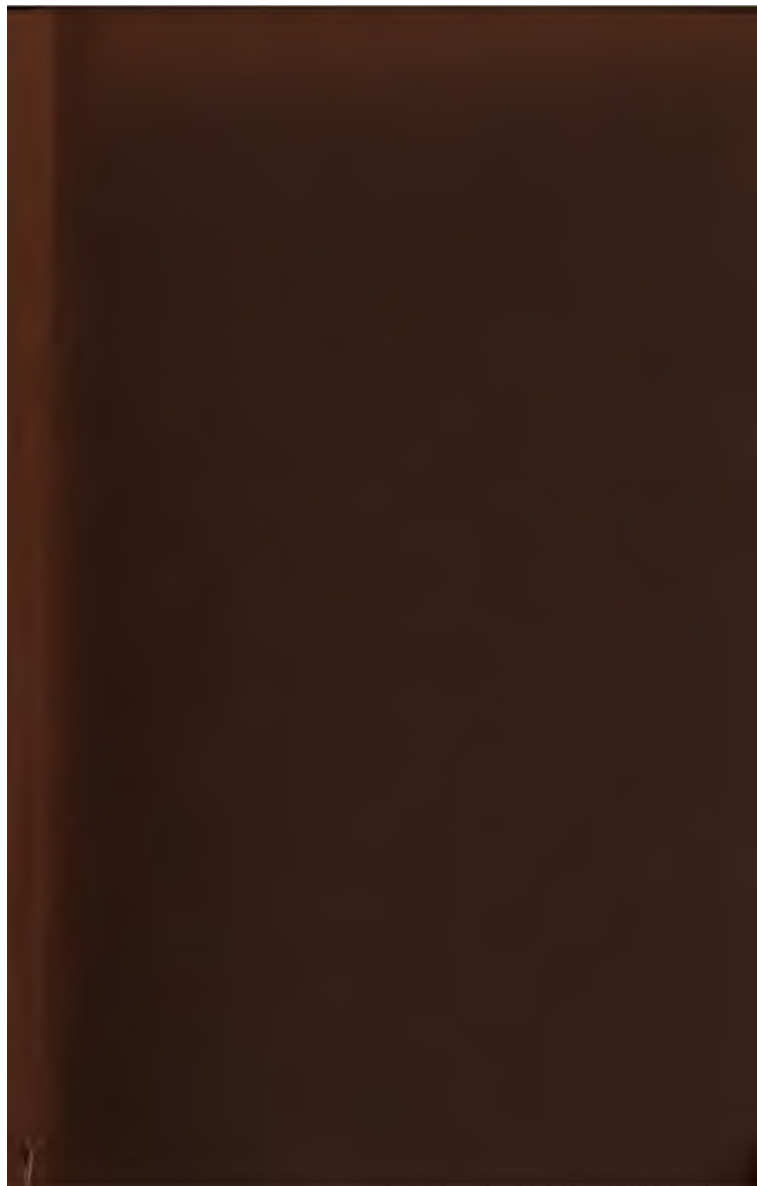


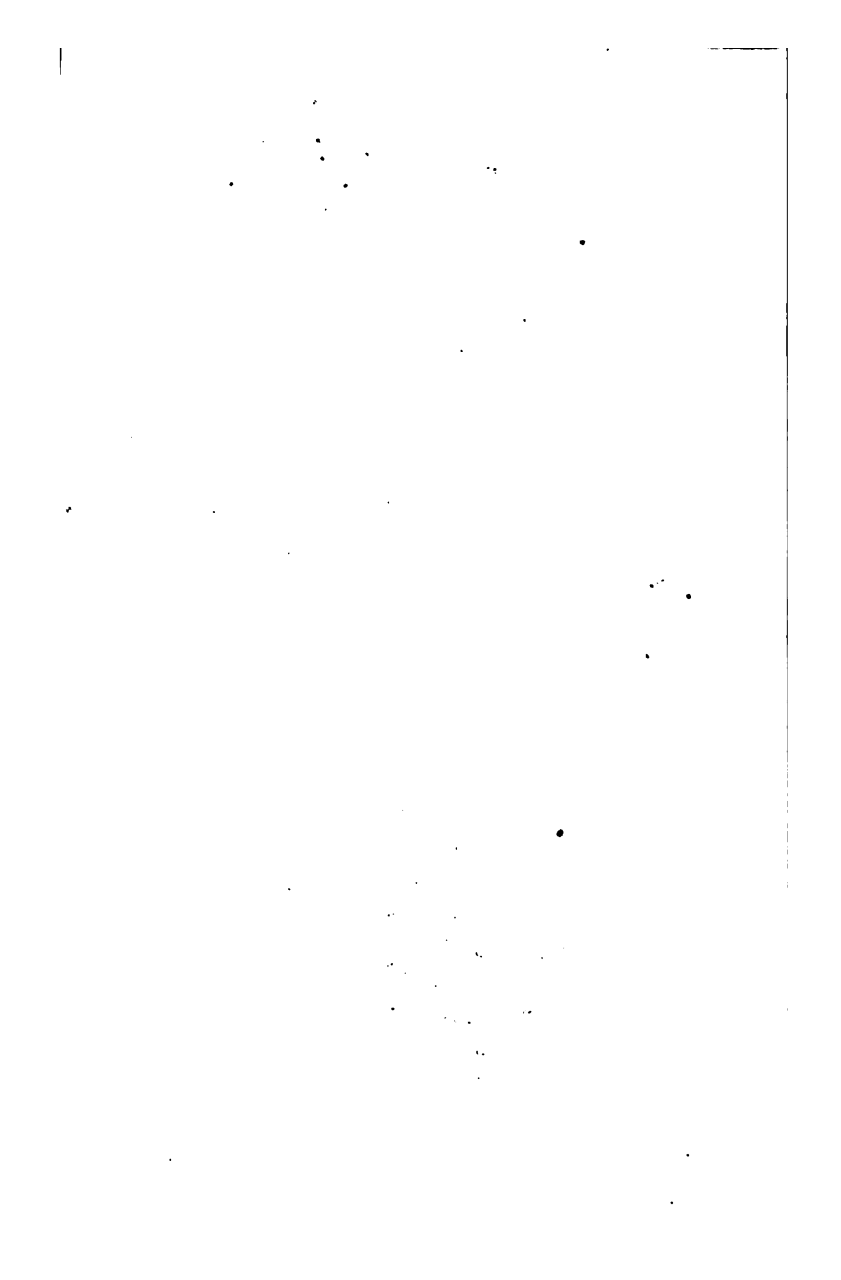
BY REV. WM. GRAHAM, D. D.



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ON  
SPIRITUALISING SCRIPTURE:

THE  
CONFESSIONS OF A MILLENARIAN.

BY REV. WM. GRAHAM, D.D.,  
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## P R E F A C E.

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1st.—ONE of the principles mentioned in this work is "interpretation by *contraries*;" and this principle I hope the reader will apply to these "Confessions." In using solemn *irony*, I follow the example of Elijah and others. This, of course, the Christian reader should not forget in perusing these pages.

2nd.—Let those who indulge in the hope of the advent, keep clear of this pamphlet, for its ostensible object is to put that event as far off as possible, and direct the mind of the bride to the coming of the Bridegroom, which is DEATH, the hope of the present church.

3rd.—Let no one who inclines to a literal interpretation of Scripture have anything to do with this book, for it seeks to confirm the present traditional theory of SPIRITUALISING, by which Origen corrected the faith of the Primitive Church.

4th.—Lest any of my learned friends should charge me with plagiarism, it seems necessary to assert solemnly that I am not conscious of that crime. It is



true I have read the *Confessions* both of J. J. Rousseau and Augustine, but I think the candid reader who takes the trouble to examine the matter, will find that this pamphlet, both as to matter and manner, is entirely different from the productions of these celebrated men. Hoping, then, that this little work may help on the study of the prophetic record in some earnest but hesitating minds, I commit it to the conscience and candour of the Christian public.

# On Spiritualising Scripture.

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## CONFESSION THE FIRST.

IT is not without grief that I make the following confessions, as they will show you, dear friend, that my views and sentiments on many subjects have become totally changed since the last time we held friendly discourse together on the subject of prophecy and biblical interpretation. Of course there is always something manly and consolatory to the conscience and reason in the rejection of long-cherished errors ; but the public recantation of them, however proper, is not without pain. To this, owing to higher considerations, I must be willing to submit.

(1.) First, then, it is known in the small circle in which I move that when very young I received (perhaps without sufficient examination) the Millenarian theory and the literal interpretation of Scripture on which it is based. Even in the theological class I ventured, in a prize essay, to advocate the national restoration and conversion of the Jews, on receiving which essay from my venerable

professor, I found written—"Mr. G., reconsider this matter." I did reconsider it; I read all books on all sides of the subject, devoted much study to the text of Holy Scripture, and, after much prayer for heavenly guidance, came to the conclusion that my first convictions were right, that the doctrine called Millenarian, concerning the Advent, the Antichrist, the First Resurrection, and the literal interpretation of prophecy, were salutary and scriptural. This continued to be the state of my convictions for many years; and both in my ministry and in my publications I have not failed to advocate the same opinions. I need not detail the reasons which have led to the change of mind on these matters; I will content myself with the statement of my present sentiments on the subjects referred to.

(2.) First, then, I have come to the conviction that Origen, Clemens' Alexandrinus, and other famous doctors of the fourth and fifth centuries, were right in adopting the anagogical (*ρα ανα*, interpreting everything in a heavenly sense) theory of biblical interpretation. The words and literal sense they considered as the mere husk or shell out of which the Divine doctrines were to be extracted, and consequently many things literally false are spiritually true, and *vice versa*. This gives the expositor great and manifold advantages, for there can be but *one literal sense* given to the text of Holy Scripture, whereas the number of

spiritual meanings depends entirely on the genius, wisdom, and sanctified imagination of the expositor. What a field this lays open for the ministers of the Gospel !

(3.) It is quite a carnal, worldly, and Talmudical opinion that the Jews should be nationally restored to Palestine. The Jews are banished from their country because of their crimes ; the Christian Church is open to receive them, by holy baptism, into her communion ; the distinction of nations has been entirely done away in the Gospel ; the scattered nation must yield to the laws of progress and population, and finally become absorbed in the Gentile communities.

(4.) I hold and believe firmly that all the curses and threatenings uttered against Israel have been literally fulfilled, or are to be so ; but I deny that on the principles of sound reason you should argue from the curse to the blessing. What ! apply all the numerous and glorious promises in Isaiah, and the Old Testament generally, to the literal seed of Abraham ! All these promises and blessings found in the Scripture under the name of Israel are to be interpreted spiritually, and applied to the Christian Church.

(5.) We may err also very much if we do not spiritualise a great number of places and things in both the Old and the New Testament. You read in the prophets of Zion, and Jerusalem, and the mountain of the Lord, and the glory of the

kingdom in the latter days: all these, and similar designations, are clearly not intended for the people of the curse, the Jews, the crucifiers of their Messiah, but for the Christian Church, which is the New Jerusalem, the mountain of the Lord's house, and the holy hill of Zion! To apply all these names to the literal Israel, and surround the Jewish nation with the promises attached to them, would be to deprive the Christian Church of many of her noblest privileges, and invest the murderers of the Lord with a halo of glory. No! all these names denote the Church, and all these promises are to be fulfilled in her!

(6.) We read in the Old Testament two classes of prophecies, both belonging to the Messiah, but quite opposite as to their signification. Very many prophecies refer to Jesus Christ as a sufferer for the sins of his people—as a lamb led to the slaughter, in whom all the sacrifices are to be fulfilled, and have their accomplishment. History has proved that these are to be taken *literally*. He was born of a virgin, in the city of Bethlehem, at the appointed time, and in the manner foretold by the prophets. All was exact, and even minute, so that the ass on which he rode, the robe which he wore, the nails in his hands and feet, the pierced side, the two thieves, and so of the rest, are all carefully mentioned in the Gospels as the fulfilment of ancient prophecies. But who would apply the same principle of interpretation to the

other prophecies which refer to the coming in the clouds of heaven, and his reigning on the throne of David? That would be to apply to the future the *same* method of interpretation as to the past! No! no! the throne in Jer. iii. 17—Judah and Jerusalem in Isa. xi. 12, xxxiii. 20—his judging the earth in righteousness (Isa. xi. 4)—his uniting the two sticks into one (Ezek. xxxvii. 20-22—his sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore (Ezek. xxxvii. 28)—his treading the winepress in the day of vengeance (Is. lxiii. 1-6)—his ancient title under which He was born, and under which He was crucified, “the King of the Jews”—these, and very many similar passages which refer to the glory and majesty of the Messiah in connection with the Jewish nation, must all be spiritually interpreted, and applied to the Christian Church. This is the grand principle that can carry you through the Old Testament prophecies without *Judaizing*. All the Scriptures that announce the suffering and humiliation of Christ are to be taken literally, and all those that refer to his kingdom and glory are to be expounded in a spiritual and sublime manner. This great principle opened my eyes at last.

(7.) It was after reading very many works against the millenarian theories that I came to the discovery of the following remarkable principle of prophetic interpretation. When two events are mentioned as first and second in chronological

order, one of these is to be taken literally, and the other spiritually, but not always in the same order; so that the first shall always be literal, and the second spiritual, or *vice versa*. The *first* restoration from Egypt was *literal*, but the *second* restoration from many lands mentioned in the same verse (Is. xi. 11) is *spiritual*; the *first* coming of Christ to suffer (Dan. ix. 25, 26) was *literal*, but the *second* coming of Christ with the clouds of heaven to reign (Dan. vii. 13, 14) is to be interpreted *spiritually*. On the other hand, when you contemplate the two resurrections mentioned in scripture, you are to reverse that order, as the *first* is to be interpreted *spiritually*, and the *second*, *literally*. When I discovered this method of interpretation, I saw at once its vast importance, and I have no doubt, if fully carried out, it will, in course of time, modify the whole system of chronology. It gives, also, a noble liberty to the sanctified imagination of the expositor.

(8.) I am greatly delighted with some of the principles adopted by Mr. Grant in his great work just published, called "The End of All Things." His first volume is an admirable historical summary of the millenarian controversy from the first ages of Christianity till the present time. The learned reader who wishes to weigh evidence should compare with "The End of All Things," "Greswell on the Parables," and then judge for himself. But the point in Mr. Grant's first volume which struck

me most forcibly was this : He has devoted a great many pages of learning to prove that there *are* figures of speech in the Holy Scriptures. I think he has established this vital point. I am persuaded that no reasonable man (if he lays aside prejudice) can read his admirable digest of evidence on this subject without being convinced by it. In this writer's hands the evidence is exhaustive: *There are figures in the Bible!*

(9.) I was formerly greatly perplexed about the arrangement and order of events which usher in and accompany the judgments of the great day of God Almighty. The *epiphany* and the *parousia*, the resurrection of the saints, the translation of the living believers, the doom of antichrist, the casting of the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire, the restoration of Israel, and the distinction between the nations on earth and the risen saints with Christ in glory—all these events require arrangement and order in the divine procedure, and this I found difficult and perplexing; but, after reading much and hearing much from learned brethren, my difficulties have all been removed, and that by a very simple principle. The method is this: a *day*, any kind of day, be it the judgment day or any other, must be opposed to *night* as its natural and opposite pole. But we know that a day and a night make twenty-four hours; now, as there is no reason in the nature of the thing that the one should be longer than the other



—say, the night sixteen, and the day only eight hours, or *vice versa*—we naturally divide the twenty-four by two, which gives the quotient of twelve hours for the right time of the judgment, for there is no hint in the Holy Scriptures that the judgment takes place at *night*. We arrive, by this easy process, at the conclusion—that the period of the great day of judgment and the time the Son of Man shall occupy the throne of His glory (Matt. xxv.) will be a natural solar day; that is, the period of twelve hours. How easy is this solution of all chronological difficulties! Certainly a simpler exposition could hardly enter the mind of man. I was amazed when it first burst in upon my mind! But great principles, like *gravity* and the *breaking of the egg*, though hard to discover, are simple and easy when once known.

(10.) The two Epistles to the Thessalonians presented, at one time, great difficulties in my way, for I had not sufficiently studied some modern authors on the subject of Biblical interpretation. I saw the coming of the Lord mentioned in every chapter, and I set it down that this coming for which we wait (1 Thess. i. 10); this coming when we are to get our crown of rejoicing (ii. 19); this coming with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God (iv. 16); this coming of the Lord Jesus with His saints (iii. 13); this coming in flaming fire (2 Thess. i. 8); this coming to consume the wicked one (Antichrist) with the

spirit of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. ii. 8); this coming for which the love of God directs us to wait (2 Thess. iii. 5);—I thought this coming was one and the same all through the epistles, and that it was no other than the one final personal advent of the Lord Jesus for the judgment of the quick and the dead. This I am now taught to consider a mistake. This is not the one personal advent (if, indeed, there be any such in Scripture), but His coming in providence at the destruction of Antichrist, or, rather, by the power of His Spirit to convert all nations and introduce the millennium. In this glorious manifestation of the Son of Man the Church will be the chief instrument in accomplishing the divine purpose. By means of the Church shall Antichrist be consumed; by means of the Church Satan shall be bound and imprisoned; and the ministers of the Church are the angels who, with the sound of the trumpet, shall gather the elect from the four winds of heaven at the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds; and His coming in the clouds, with power and great glory (Matt. xxiv. 30, 31), means the approach of Titus and the Roman army to besiege Jerusalem. We, in this way, arrive at the principle that the phrases “coming of Christ,” “coming of the Lord,” “coming in the clouds,” “coming in flaming fire,” coming “with His angels,” or “with His saints,” is to be taken in a *literal* or in

a *spiritual* sense, according as the creed or the chronology may require. That is what the Germans call the evangelical liberty of interpretation. The principle is of very general application, and is very useful in meeting the millenarians.

(11.) As to the purpose or end of the Second Advent, I thought at one time that (except in the case of Antichrist, Babylon, and the Devil) it would be for the peace and benediction of the earth and its teeming populations. I thought He was coming from heaven to restore all things and shed around His divine presence the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord (Acts iii. 19, 20, 21); I supposed that His sitting on the throne of His glory was the time of the regeneration (Matt. xix. 28), which is the time of the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. viii. 19),—which is the time of deliverance from the bondage of corruption,—which is the time of the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. (Rom. viii. 23.) In the simplicity of my heart I really believed He was to bring us grace and salvation, peace and prosperity, and in the language of such Psalms as the 96th and the 98th, we might join in the universal hallelujah, “Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with

the harp and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets, and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the Lord the King. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity." This joyful expectation was strengthened in me by the New Testament encouragements to long for and wait for, and hasten unto the coming of the day of God, for I thought it was in His heart to abide with us and to bless us. But this was only vanity and vexation of spirit, or, it may be, the working of a fevered imagination. The coming of Christ is to end grace for evermore; no nation shall be regenerated, no ignorant offenders spared, no ungodliness shall be turned from Jacob in that dreadful day. By one stroke of doom the human race is to be terminated, and the earth, given to the fiery flame, is probably to become the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Now this being the true state of the case, it was natural that we should cease to pray for His coming, for surely it would require a diabolical disposition to wish for the destruction of mankind. Nero's desire that the Roman people had but one neck, that he might decapitate them all at once, would be mercy compared with such a prayer. And thus the natural instinct of mercy in the

modern churches has led them altogether, or nearly altogether, to give up praying for the Second Advent of our Lord. The longer He stays away the better, for the longer will there be a sphere for the display of divine grace. An earthly king may dispense favours in his progress through his dominions, but the King of glory brings with Him no *grace*. (1 Peter i. 13.) His coming finishes the history of this earth; there shall be neither conversion, nor times of refreshing, nor any more saving of souls. He touches this globe with His foot, and history dies in a moment, the human species is terminated, and fire and everlasting darkness settle upon our desolate habitation. Is such a state of things to be prayed for? Surely not. Such an advent is no hope, and the modern churches are quite right in ceasing to pray for it.

(12.) Now this modern view of the Advent presents to the thoughtful many and great advantages, such as the following. In the first place, it helps to bring the scheme of divine prophecy into harmony with modern theology and modern modes of thinking; the theologians wish time to convert the nations, and this gives them the space of more than a thousand years certainly, and probably much more; and the philosophers are beginning to derive the human race from the brutal tribes of apes and monkeys, so that even benevolence could hardly wish for any other destiny for humanity

than extinction. Then, secondly, putting off the advent as long as possible, we are acting out the noble philosophical maxim of "The greatest happiness for the greatest number," inasmuch as conversion continues up to the time of the advent and no longer. Is not the earth to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea? Are not nations and kingdoms and the distant heathen to be given to the Son of God for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession? How could this be accomplished if the Lord were to come speedily and terminate the human species? It would be impossible. We need time for all this, and therefore let us put the advent as far off as reason and Holy Scripture will warrant, for his coming is to smite the earth with a curse. Thirdly, this view of the advent delivers us from that feverish anxiety which filled the primitive church on the subject of prophecy. The Thessalonians were waiting, and longing, and hoping; the natural and quiet sobriety which should characterise faith was shaken by the impulsion of an ecstatic hope, so that they were ever plunging forward to get at it before the time; now this error is entirely avoided by the moderns, who deprive the advent of the attributes of hope, and at the same time put it at the least a thousand years off. Of course, it is no longer the hope of the church, and death is coming in to take the place of resurrection in the minds of the

people, because it is felt to be certain and near at hand.

(13.) I have been reading lately a number of works against the millenarians, and I was particularly struck with the clearness and faithfulness of the writers, especially in calling men and things by their right names. Few in these degenerate days have the boldness "to call a shovel a shovel," but these beloved brethren have surmounted the prejudices of the times in a remarkable and praiseworthy manner. Take the following as a few examples.

Speaking of the millenarians, one dear brother says, "Darkness, confusion, and inconsistency pervade their works. Few of them have any clear conception of the objects for which they are now contending; the mass of unintelligible jargon with which their publications abound, gives sad evidence of their own incapacity to comprehend their subject; for no man who is possessed of any ideas at all on the theme which he is prepared to illustrate, would expose himself by committing to paper stuff unspeakably worse than nonsense. Of such pure nonsense, however, we have samples in abundance." —"No reverie of a lunatic was ever more baseless and visionary. But still, notwithstanding its matchless silliness, absurdity, and impiety, from the zeal, the ardour, the bitterness and vehemence with which they plead and strive for its prevalence, there can be no doubt that its advocates believe in

its reality.”—“ Had we been told a few years ago, in this country, amidst all the scriptural knowledge that it possessed, and surrounded by the blaze of British literature and science, a dozen of men favoured with the advantages of a liberal education, could be found capable, not only of swallowing all the nonsense and jargon of millenarianism, but actually of avowing their belief before the Church and the world of such pure unmingled absurdity—the intelligence would have been counted as a burlesque upon our countrymen, and a libel upon human nature.”—“ After men of their piety and worth, of their learning and talents, have, not only without evidence, but in opposition to the plainest dictates of revelation, actually become in sober earnest the votaries of such a childish, stupid, and groundless theory, we have little cause to marvel at the wide sway of ignorance and error, and the tenacity with which others adhere to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the Pope’s infallibility, and all the dogmas of the Romish faith.”

These are a few specimens of the “*ingenium perfervidum Scotorum*,” and deserve all praise for their happy union of clearness with vigour, and faithfulness with Christian courtesy and charity. Locke and Whateley have shown us that a multitude of errors arise from the imperfection of names and loose insufficient definition ; but here there is no failure in these respects. The millenarians are



clearly and logically named, defined, and categorised. A famous American divine has also gained immortal renown by the way he has dealt with the theories and visions of the millenarians, for he calls them gross conceptions, impossibilities, fantasies of the brain without foundation in Scripture, enthusiastic visions, dreams of men, visionaries of ancient and modern times, fancies of lively imaginations, enthusiastic visions, idle, yea worse than idle, fancy-dreams, dreams and fancies of ancient and modern millenarians, who make a worldly and sensual kingdom. Now, as there is no more excellent way of getting a dog killed than to call him *mad*, so let us join in extinguishing these wretches by giving them the names that belong to them—fools, fanatics, idiots, enthusiasts, visionaries, sensualists, and all such like designations in their greatest variety; for though all of them may not take effect, some of them will stick, and the good work will be hastened thereby. Also, let us vary this music by a few crotchets indicating silliness on their part, and a kind of gentle patronising benevolence on ours, such as “our worthy friends,” “these worthy men,” “good, pious, learned gentlemen,” “worthy expounders of the Apocalypse,” and similar phrases, in which sarcasm, compassion, and contempt are happily blended together. But at the same time, let us admit occasionally that there are some respectable men among them, such as Newton, Mede, and

Alford, to give variety and piquancy to the delineation.

(14.) I was at one time greatly impressed by a kind of unity that seemed to run through most of the parables, identifying them chronologically with the period of the Lord's absence, and the reign of evil, Antichrist, and Satan in the world. Thus the wheat and the tares grow together till the harvest ; the sheep and the goats feed together till the Good Shepherd appears ; the fishermen continue hauling the drag-net till it and they reach the eternal shore of separation ; the wise and the foolish virgins march on together, till at midnight the Bridegroom comes ; and so I thought it was impossible there could be universal righteousness while this mixed state of things continued. But here I was set right by the assurance of many dear brethren, that ages and ages before the harvest, and before the coming of the Bridegroom, the goats will entirely disappear from the field, the tares will be all rooted up, or changed into wheat, and the foolish virgins will all become wise.

This, at first, did not satisfy me, as I thought it was contrary to the Word, but after meditating on the wisdom of my brethren, the strength of modern traditions, and the dangers of dissension, I thought it better to yield to the judgment of the elders. I am now, therefore, to believe that wickedness is either ceasing, or about to cease ; that truth, and virtue, and godliness will soon become universal ;

that the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord; and that tares, and goats, and foolish virgins, and Antichrist, and his crew, and the devil and his angels, shall all by the preaching of the gospel be utterly extinguished or converted ages of ages before the coming of the Lord. The apprehending, binding, and imprisonment of Satan in the bottomless pit are especially set down as the work of the Church. As the whole Church can hardly be engaged in this transaction, I suppose it is to be done by deputation; but surely it will be a difficult and even dangerous business for those concerned in it. *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.*

(15.) But as in this sinful world there is no system without its difficulties, nor any state of the Church without its dangers, let us always guard against these as much as possible, when stating and defending our spiritual method of exegesis. If the Millenarians have their perplexities, we also are not altogether beyond the reach of attack. I read lately in a book on the principles of pure reason, this motto on the title page: "*To require us to believe in the outward representations of the Old and New Testament histories, is the destruction both of the faith and of the Church.*" (*Nork, Bible Mythology.*) A very learned professor said to me lately, that he believed in the resurrection of Christ, because he was persuaded that the Saviour was not really dead, and a Swiss professor and

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preacher declared his belief in the *spiritual* resurrection and ascension of Christ, because the literal belief was contrary to experience and the law of gravitation. The famous Professor of Theology, Dr. Schenkel, of Heidelberg, has published a learned work to demonstrate that Christ's resurrection was a *spiritual*, and not a bodily resurrection, and that there is and can be no resurrection of the flesh, except in a spiritual and mystic manner. You are aware, I suppose, that the same opinions have taken some root in America, and on this very subject, the Protestant Church of Calvin, and of France, is divided to the centre. Many, very many able men, and ministers of the Word, deny that God was *literally* manifested in the flesh; that the Saviour *literally* rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, or that he shall ever *literally* come again. All these are not facts of historical verity, but *spiritual* realities to be explained to the faithful according to the genius and judgment of the preacher.

This is the side of our spiritualism that offers the enemy easiest entrance into our citadel. It is certainly a great and pressing difficulty. A clever and subtle rationalist who reverences the Scripture exceedingly in his own way, charges me with fanaticism and inconsistency, and declares that I have led him into his present opinions. With a certain key (he says) you have opened one part of

the chamber of imagery and I have used it in opening the other ; you spiritualise the future, and I spiritualise the past also ; you say, the Jews are not to be restored from the nations, I say, they were not restored from Egypt ; the exodus, the wilderness, the cloudy pillar, the voice of God, the appearances of angels, the theophanies, &c., are no realities of history, but popular Jewish fables, containing, like the mythology of Greece and Rome, many sublime and instructive doctrines and duties. If I deny the literality of the coming of Christ in the flesh, you deny the literality of his coming in the clouds ; if I deny the literality of the second resurrection, you deny the literality of the first ; you spiritualise the promises given to Israel, and take the threatenings according to the letter ; I spiritualise both, and deny that God ever either cursed or blessed any man, or any nation, except *spiritually*, that is, He allows prosperity or adversity to proceed in the world according as individuals or nations obey or disobey the immutable laws of nature. All the promises and the threatenings are spiritual, all indications in Scripture of *immediate* revelation are spiritual ; all supernatural events, as signs, wonders, dreams, visions, voices from above, and miracles, are to be taken in a sublime and *spiritual* sense. Who can deny the miraculousness of the future prophecy, and maintain the miraculousness of the past history ? Why are the miracles in Isa. xi. 15, to be spiritualised,

and those referred to in the next verse held to be literal positive facts ?

In this way the rationalist seeks to turn the tables upon us by means of the instrument we have put into his hands, and I can perceive symptoms of many troubles likely to arise from its perverse application. To remedy these evils as much as possible, and vindicate at the same time our spiritual mode of Biblical interpretation, we should do two things:—1. In all our discourses, conversations and writings, while asserting that the prophecies are to be spiritualised, we must assert strongly, and repeatedly, that we hold the literality of the historical parts. 2. We must discover, or invent, some clear and profound principle which may make it patent to the common understanding that the prophecies are *not* to be interpreted in the same way as the historical parts—that the fulfilled and the unfulfilled promises and prophecies are to be expounded on fundamentally different grounds. This is at present a great desideratum, and blunts many of our arrows against the Millenarians.

(16.) “When God is described as speaking to man, He does so in the only way in which He who is a Spirit can speak to one encompassed with flesh and blood ; not to the outward organs of sensation, but to that intelligence which is kindred to Himself, the Great Fountain of knowledge. The feeble consciousness of God in man expresses itself in this form. Thus it is not to be supposed that the

Eternal Being spake the Decalogue *audibly* in the air in articulate sounds, simply because the writer says, 'God *spake* all these words, saying' (Ex. xx. 1). In like manner, when He appeared to the patriarchs, called to them, addressed them by name, commanded them to do certain things; or, when *His Angel* appeared, which is only a different expression for *Himself*, we must resolve the thing into a strong manifestation of the spiritual consciousness in man. It is of some consequence to understand the visible appearances and spoken words of Deity in the Old Testament books, especially the earliest ones, because they are frequently apprehended in a sense materially literal, from the rude conceptions of the writers having so described them. This is hardly compatible with the nature of the Divine Being. The only true philosophical view of all such manifestations as are related in the form of outward phenomena or visible signs, is to consider them nothing more than *forms of expression* indicative of spiritual conceptions. God *spake to Abraham* is tantamount to saying that the consciousness of God in Abraham was a strongly impelling motive; that that patriarch was the first who became divinely impressed with the idea of a pure and holy God, and who determined to obey Him. His *heart* and *conscience* spake within him of one God totally different from the gods of the nations; and he acted accordingly. All the communications of Jehovah to Moses must be explained

in the same way." (*Davidson's Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. i. p. 233.)

These are the words of my friend and fellow-student, Samuel Davidson, the most learned, or at least one of the most learned men in England, or the world; and as I read them tears fell on the page and dimmed it—warm, bitter, loving tears, arising from friendship, from former memories, from my views of inspiration, and from profound respect for the author. May God forgive him for the evil he has done! I have read Colenso, and six or seven answers in which he is fairly met and beaten. Birks, especially, has crushed him on every point, and exposed at the same time (as McCaul has done also) his incompetent acquaintance with Hebrew literature. But Dr. Davidson's far more profound and dangerous work has had no reply. But I have quoted Dr. Davidson to show how dangerous the principle of spiritual mystical interpretation may become when carried out to its full extent, by resolute and unscrupulous opponents; and that in all our writings and conversations we must point out, clearly and frequently, that *unfulfilled* prophecy is the only region where *spiritualising* is allowed. All the rest of Scripture is to be taken in the ordinary natural literal sense of the written words.

(17.) As in the laws of philosophical association of ideas, the principle of *contrast* holds a conspicuous place, so does it also in the anagogical



exegesis of Origen and Clemens, which we have accepted. This law of opposites, or contraries, is found crossing our path wherever we wander, whether in the regions of nature, or Providence, or history ; and why should we not find it in the interpretation of the Bible also ? We do find it, and use it perpetually. Jesus is the LIFE, and is never in any way identified with *death*, save when he died to destroy it ; yet we constantly say he comes to us in death. When we die it is to go to the Lord ; but we say continually, it is his coming to us. Look for Christ, wait for Christ, be ready to meet the Bridegroom, and all similar expressions, we interpret of *death*, which is interpretation by *contraries*. His coming stealthily like a thief, and visibly with the rapidity of lightning, we interpret to mean his coming after the previous warning of a thousand years, and that is by the principle of *contraries*. When we say that the angel descending with the chain to bind Satan, and imprison him, is the Church, and the angels that gather the elect from the four winds of heaven are the ministers of the Church ; that the visible coming in the clouds of heaven is the approach of Titus and the Roman armies to besiege Jerusalem ; that the throne of David, on which the Son of Man is to sit, is not in Jerusalem, but in heaven, and means the throne of God ; that the exodus was literal, but the restoration from the present dispersion spiritual ; that the first resurrection is

spiritual and the second literal; that the first coming of Christ is literal and the second spiritual—in all these, and a multitude of similar cases, the principle is clearly anagogical. We interpret by *contraries*.

In this we imitate our master, Origen, who, while he expounds the Scripture generally after a spiritual manner, interpreted Matt. xix. 12 literally, and mutilated himself. But, while we in so far imitate Origen in principle, we apply the principle to a different class of objects. He applied it mainly to the slavery of the Old Testament, the slaughter of the Canaanites, the cutting off of idolaters, and the laws that referred specially to the interior administration of the Jewish nation. His object was the benevolent one of reducing the harsher and more material principles of the Old Testament into harmony with the New; ours is to spiritualise the unfulfilled prophecies, and confound the Millenarians.

(18.) Be it announced, then, that, as the human being is composed of three principles, body, soul, and spirit, so the Word of God contains three radically distinct, yet harmoniously combined, significations, the *literal* or historical, which is the *body*, the *moral*, which is the *soul*, and the *mystical*, which is the *spirit*; and the *mystical* is to be divided again into the *allegorical* and the *anagogical*, which gives five beautiful varieties of interpretation to every passage in the Holy Scrip-

tures, and gives abundance of room for the genius and fancy of the expositor. The literal meaning is easily found out, and the moral rarely very difficult; but the mystical is exceedingly recondite, and can be discovered only by those to whom God has given the mystical faculty. The literal sense is rarely of any value, often unfruitful, absurd, and altogether unworthy of God; the moral unfolds the doctrines and duties that relate to the inward state of the soul, and the conduct of human life; the mystical sense is the deep hidden profundity of divine intelligence which can be discovered only by the highly gifted expositors, and it is divided into the allegorical, which relates to the earthly things, and the anagogical, which carries you up into the heavenly spheres. This last is the glorious divine and ultimate sense of Scripture.

These principles ruled the interpretation of the Bible for centuries, and even Jerome, who was their greatest opponent, sometimes yields to their fascinating influence, as when he makes the Chaldeans demons, and Abishag, the comforter of David's old age, heavenly wisdom. Now, again, after a long period of fruitless and frigid interpretation, we are coming to the three-fold or even five-fold method of exposition which the illustrious Origen reduced to fixed principles, and thereby identified it for ever with his name. Thus we can say Christ comes literally at the end of all things, morally when the believer dies, and spiritually at conver-

sion ; allegorically by providential judgment upon the nations, and anagogically when— But not having the true mystical faculty, I dare not venture further, and so I stop. But you can see at a glance in how many ways these principles may be useful to us in confuting the millenarians or literalists, as Origen Adamantius, the most illustrious man of his age, so successfully did. He positively changed the whole current of ecclesiastical history on the subject of the Second Advent and Biblical exegesis. In following him we are following the footsteps of a great and profoundly learned father of the Christian Church.

(19.) The principles or creed of a church may remain unrepealed, and owing to the change of sentiment gradually introduced, or the adoption of new modes of interpretation, the greatest variety of opinions may exist in the Church in the course of ages, or even at the same time. Millenarianism was the current opinion among the ancients, if we believe the testimony of the fathers, but it yielded to the power of time and the genius of Origen Adamantius ; the primitive church was orthodox, but it yielded for a time to the sweep of Arianism, and the illustrious Athanasius was alone against the world ; time rolls on, and the Arian Goths and Vandals gradually yield to the seductions of orthodoxy and the Catholic Church ; again, they appear at the reformation in Poland, and afterwards make a permanent settlement in England ;

and now again, these opinions under different forms and names are cropping up in almost all the Christian nations, and multitudes are coming back to the unitarianism of the Gothic nations in the first ages of Christianity.

The first English Reformers and the English Church in the days of Elizabeth, were most certainly Calvinistic, and that in the highest degree; but though the creed remained the same, the convictions of the prelates and clergy generally became and remained for a century Arminian; and now again, a great body of the ministers and people of the Episcopal Church are returning to Calvinism, and bringing the millenarian doctrines of the ancient Church fathers with them. This, if possible, we must not permit them to do; and yet the task seems a difficult one, for these opinions have gained considerable numbers among all classes of the community. The lead in this millenarian crusade was taken by the Episcopal Church. Then came that heretical giant, Edward Irving, and his followers; and after that, I think, John Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. Many ministers and members of the Free Church of Scotland showed leanings to the same fanatical opinions, among whom was the illustrious Chalmers, and several wrote fiercely in their defence. At the present time I fear the Dissenters of England are also catching the infection, as *THE RAINBOW*, a vigorous millenarian periodical, is said to be edited

by an Independent minister, and to have a wide circulation among both Churchmen and Dissenters. Mr. Grant, however, gives me hope. He thinks the tide is turning, and the fervour of millenarian enthusiasm is beginning to be exhausted—the unscriptural hope of the Advent, which leads to so many errors and so much fanaticism, is yielding to the sober but sure and blessed hope of bringing in the latter-day glory by means of missions and the ministry of the Church. He is certainly a man of experience, and as likely as any other to give a correct opinion as to the signs of the times. He has enumerated certain periodicals of a millenarian tendency. I wish he had mentioned the periodicals devoted to prophecy which take the other side.

(20.) As this paper has treated mainly of the principles of Biblical interpretation, let me finish by a brief recapitulation, and then, as the great moralist says, come to the conclusion at which nothing is concluded.

1. First, then, let us hold fast the vital principle that there *are* figures of speech in the Bible.

2. Let us deny absolutely the restoration of the Jews : for, if we admit that, we must admit the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ over them.

3. Let us ever hold fast the principle, though we should state it with as much modesty and self-denial as possible, that all the curses of the Old Testament are for the Jews, and all the blessings

promised to Israel and Jerusalem are for ourselves.

4. Let us assert and defend, with all possible earnestness, the principle that the prophecies are to be differently interpreted from the history, and that the unfulfilled predictions are to be interpreted spiritually, and the fulfilled literally.

5. When we find events arranged in chronological order, as first, second, third, we are enabled, by the spiritual mode of interpretation, to take them one about, literally or figuratively, according to the necessity of our system.

6. If we are able to introduce the *five senses* of Scripture defended by Origen, we should be still more able to confound the Literalists, and annihilate their degrading and carnal theories.

7. Let us discourage, by all the means in our power, the practice of waiting for and praying for the speedy coming of the Saviour; for that practice, more than anything else, leads to the belief in the personal reign.

8. Death is the same as his coming, as we have proved by the principle of *contrast*, or contraries, and to that event we are to direct the hearts of believers.

9. As the end of Christ's coming is to stop all conversion, terminate the human race, and abandon the earth to everlasting fire, the longer He stays away the better.

10. It is false to say this is a dispensation of

election, as if the Gospel was not able, or as if God did not intend, to convert all mankind.

11. As the Church and the ministers of the Church have a great work to do, we must keep it constantly before their minds. It is not merely the saving of an elect people : they have also to overthrow Antichrist, cast the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire, bind and imprison the devil in the bottomless pit, and then fill the whole earth with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. What a labour is before the preachers of the Gospel !

12. Finally, let us hold forth earnestly and repeat constantly all the plain Scripture texts where God promises to make religion universal, and all the virgins wise and holy before the coming of the Lord. This will, we may hope, be useful to our millenarian brethren.

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## CONFESSION THE SECOND.

**I** NEED not remind you, my dear brother, of the sweet intercourse we have had together in former times, nor of the sad delusion on my part which diminished, if it did not altogether break up our communion. You kept the safe and pleasant path of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, and your zeal and manifold labours have had their just reward in the affections and honours of the church. You have earned them nobly, and may you wear them long.

Do not suppose that I write these lines in the spirit of complaint, or that I set myself to fight against the arrangements of divine providence. The past cannot be recalled, and regret, while it cannot cancel past evil, may in a measure unfit us for present good. I am inclined, therefore, in the language of the East, to recline my back against the mountain of satisfaction, and take refuge in the doctrine of predestination. Hear me, then, patiently, while I trace in a few sentences the

phases of my faith and the motives or principles which led me to the theory of the personal reign.

(2.) It is surely the desire of every benevolent mind to diminish suffering in every possible way, in consistency with the happiness of the species and the moral government of God. I read in the holy Scriptures of the terrors of hell, and at the same time pondered the awful words of the Son of God concerning the broad way and the wide gate, and I asked myself the question, "Is this, then, the destiny of the human race, that the immense majority are to be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?" This thought troubled me very much, and put me to my wits' end; for, like the man in the iron cage, I seemed hemmed in on every side. I could not deny the very words of holy Scripture, and the everlasting damnation of the greater part of mankind seemed inconsistent with the love and benevolence of God. In my mental agony, the first who offered me assistance was the venerable Arian minister, the Rev. Dr. Bruce, a descendant, it is said, of the famous Scottish king of that name, as it is written in one of the poets—

"Scots whom Bruce has often led."

"Hear me," said he; "there is no everlasting hell; such a thought is quite inconsistent with the character of God."

"What then?" said I; "tell me—tell me the

issue. Shall the fires of hell accomplish what the Saviour's love could not? Is the lake of fire the great penitentiary of the universe, out of which sinners shall issue clothed in white robes and with crowns upon their heads?"

"Not so fast, not so fast, my dear sir; you are too nimble for me; I do not believe in restitution, I believe in *annihilation*. They shall suffer what eternal justice requires for the vindication of the righteousness of God, and then they shall be annihilated, so that finally the creation shall be a perfect unity, without spot or stain, and God shall be all in all."

I paused and pondered much on the doctrine of annihilation, and the longer I looked at it the less I liked it, until, dizzy and nearly maddened by looking over the brink of the infinite gulf, I drew back in horror, though hell-fire was behind me, crying in the depths of my soul, "O God! eternal Creator and Preserver of the world, it cannot be! It is not so, and it cannot be, that annihilation is the destiny of thy creatures!" and I felt assured, both from the Bible and the echo of my own heart, that annihilation was not the most perfect way of glorifying God and perfecting the universe.

(3.) In this state of perplexity I remained certain days—a misty, hazy condition, neither faith nor infidelity, but a middle state between them; until a kind episcopalian friend of the high and dry school said to me, "Weep not; things are not

in such a wretched condition as you suppose ; are we not living in Christian England ? Look at Scotland, Germany, France, and the whole wide domain of Christendom. Now, all these are made members of Christ and heirs of the kingdom of heaven by the rite of baptism : and if occasionally there may be an apostate or infidel, still the great mass of the baptized are safe, and the way of salvation is not so narrow as you imagine. This great doctrine of baptismal regeneration is the easiest way of increasing the number of the faithful ; and if you receive it, it will quiet your mind, as it has satisfied mine."

"Stop, my good friend," said a Roman Catholic gentleman who happened to be present ; "you have made a slight mistake in your calculations ; not all the baptized multitudes of Christendom are members of Christ and heirs of the kingdom of heaven, but only those who are *rightly* baptized ; and be assured this power of regenerating man by the waters of baptism belongs only to priests of the true church, whose visible head is the sovereign Pontiff of Rome. The holy nations of Spain, Italy, Portugal, France, South America, and other Catholic countries are truly regenerated, and bring forth works meet for repentance ; but England, Scotland, America, and the Protestant nations of the continent

have no real baptism, no regeneration of the Holy Ghost, and hence these nations, being filled with the most dreadful immoralities, are falling rapidly into decay, and seem destined to perish and be forgotten." Then, turning to me, he said, "If you want to diminish pain and increase pleasure, you must turn to the Catholic Church, in which you find here the permission of every enjoyment you can pay for, and in the next world you have the benevolent and wholesome institution of purgatory, from which, after a few hundreds or thousands of years' torment, according to your sins, ye shall come forth in the beauty of holiness, and fitted for the heavenly mansions."

"Be silent on that subject," cried I, "for on purgatory my mind is made up, and nothing more need be said. Purgatory is the mark of the Beast; with the Beast it rose, and with the Beast it shall pass away. Fire may purify metals, but it never purifies souls. Besides, purgatory is not in the Holy Scripture; it is based on the traditions of the fathers, who borrowed it from the Jews; and the early ages of Christianity know nothing of it. As soon as we leave the word of God, we enter on a sea of boundless speculation. As a mere matter of opinion, apart from Scripture, I prefer the purgatory of the Talmud to that of the Romish Church."

The rabbinical hell is, in fact, the mildest I

know of, and in this respect far surpasses the Hades of Pluto, in his celebrated republic. But the barriers that stood in my way with the rabbies were insurmountable. I could neither receive their infamous fables nor spirit away the positive declarations both of the Old and New Testaments; for at that time I was a rigid believer in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and that the honest expositor was bound to follow the ordinary common signification of the words.

(4.) When my mind was directed to the subject of prophecy, what joy was mine! A new and glorious world opened up to my vision, in which all my expectations, and more than all, were to be realised; a redeemed, ransomed, jubilant creation, full of life and holiness and joy; death destroyed in the resurrection of the saints; Satan, the tempter, the usurper, imprisoned; humanity restored to all its powers within, and unhampered by the ligaments that at present bind it; the whole earth one glorious, blessed family of God, in which the gifts and graces, and all the attributes of the adorable Trinity, so far as they are imitable, are to be reflected as in a mirror, and thus the manifold wisdom of God unfolded through the Church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. (Eph. iii. 10.)

I saw in that glorious prophetic future the long looked-for *unity* after which my soul was intensely longing, the heavenly and the earthly things, the

*ta panta* (Col. i. 16), the visible and the invisible, the thrones and dominions and principalities of the boundless creation harmoniously united under one Head, and that Head the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the God-man who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me* ! O God, how my heart swelled with love to Thee, the great Fount and Father of all, for such immortal hopes.

I saw in these ages of glory a consummation worthy of the incarnation, atonement, intercession, and advent of the great God and Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ ; I saw there the means (namely, the direct action and agency of God Himself) by which we could reasonably hope to see the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, for I sighed over the bitter, bitter reflection, but not the less true because bitter, that Christianity was more widely extended in the third and fourth centuries than it is at the present time.

I saw in these millennial ages of blessedness and purity and peace, a great and gigantic system of divine operation, an eonial economy or plan of the ages (Eph. iii. 11, Greek), of such dimensions and glory, that the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, that refer to the Jews, to the anti-christian nations, to the Church of Christ in its two departments, to the destruction of evil and the evil One, to the renewal of the earth and the heavens, to the times of refreshing under the hand

of the promised Comforter, to the coming of Christ and the importance attached to it in the New Testament, might find a reasonable and substantial fulfilment.

An old lady, after one of my lectures on Palestine, in which I dwelt a good deal on what I saw at Bethel, asked me if when there I had seen *Jacob's ladder*, to which replying in the negative, she told me I might go back again, for I had missed the only thing worth seeing. Now I verily thought that the glorious vision (Gen. xxviii. 12) would really find its fulfilment in the advent and kingdom of Christ, when from the hiding-place of power, from the pavilion of glory, from the throne of the incarnate God, the angels of God shall go forth according to the command of the Son of man, to execute their appointed offices throughout the boundless creation. Jesus is the centre; on Him they descend, from Him they ascend. His royal person is the burning imperial focus of light and power to all created things, for He is the Head, not of the Church only (Eph. v. 23), nor of the human race only (1 Cor. xi. 3; xv. 25), but of the angels also (1 Peter iii. 22), and indeed of the whole creation of God. (Eph. i. 22.) All the classes and distinctions of classes that met Him in and under the glory on the holy mount; all the covenants connected with the names of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, have their power and essence in Him, the



covenant head ; all the orders, powers, principalities, and hierarchies of the heavens, and all the other glories, if there be other glories found in the universe, are summed up in Him who is the Head of all principalities and powers, and shall find their initiatory development in the mediatorial kingdom of the millennium, and their full development in the ages of eternity.

(5.) When any great event, or any great truth connected with our destiny or prospects, first breaks in upon the mind, the mental vision is for a time dazzled, the actions of the members paralysed, and even the vital power of breathing for a moment suspended, and the reason, bewildered by an unanticipated incomprehensible splendour, yields itself to the dulcet music of hope. So it was with me when my mother's death revealed to me the awful necessity of a new heart and a new life ; so it was with me when, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, I received the public commission to preach the Gospel. I was filled with awe, with terror, and with joy. I retired for a time to a cottage in a cave by the seashore, with no companion but the Greek Testament, to examine myself, and commune alone with God. So it was with me when the hope of the advent, like the star of the morning, like the sun in his splendour, like whatever is divine and glorious, shed its beams into my longing soul like lightning rooting itself in the earth, elevating what was low, strengthening what

was weak, fructifying what was barren, and consuming what was noxious in that weedy soil. What light it seemed to throw over the divine purpose, the majesty of the work of Christ, the reality of the mediatorial kingdom, the importance attached to the advent in the Bible, and the various offices of the triune God ! What an opening up of Scripture !

I sat under the ministry of three of the best, and ablest, and most orthodox ministers in Ireland. One of them was my professor, now asleep in Christ ; another is still with us, but leaving us speedily, I fear, the greatest and most eloquent of living Irishmen ; and the third, still in manly vigour, one of the best, if not the very best pastor I have known. Under the ministry of these godly men I sat, and to them, under God, I owe what I can never repay. But yet very rarely did I hear a sermon, or a lecture, or a discussion on the subject of the second advent ; and as to solemn prayer for the coming of Christ, my memory dees not serve me with many examples of such a thing in any of the churches at that time. The atonement, the Godhead of Christ, the work and offices of the Holy Ghost, and indeed a very full Gospel, were fully and eloquently announced to the people ; but the hope of the advent, either because death was a sufficient hope, or because there were many difficulties and uncertainties connected with it, or because certain errors and heresies had been

associated with some men who held it, or because Satan strove to conceal it, was rarely and languidly preached.

When I opened the Bible, I was met by an astounding fact which, without seeing it with my eyes, I would not have believed the seven wise men of Greece, on their oath, had they stated it, *that the advent was more spoken of than the atonement*. I read over the New Testament, I marked all the passages in which the atonement and the advent are mentioned, and I found, as to the number, they stand in something like the relation of two to three !

What ! are we to preach, and believe, and converse as much about the second advent as about the cross, the atonement, the redemption of the world ? Why, this would revolutionise the pulpit, turn people's heads, and uproot the framework of society ! But the *ratio is two to three*.

You mean to say, do you, that I, a minister of God's Word, set for the salvation of souls, glorying as Paul did only in the cross, should think, speak, teach, and preach as much about the second advent as the blood of Christ ? The ratio in the New Testament *is as two to three*.

I have been (you say) among all parties and classes, I have heard the most famous men of the age, and I have never heard such prominence given to the advent. But in the *New Testament the ratio is as two to three*.

But tell me truly, do you yourself, or did you even in your youth, give the second coming of Christ such a striking prominence in your ministrations? I answer candidly, *I did not*, nor does any man living do so; but I repeat it, in the *New Testament the ratio is as two to three*.

Let God be true and every man a liar. I am, however, fully persuaded that what God thinks, speaks, writes, and reveals much about, we should not think, speak, and preach little about, much less forget it altogether. I think this great prominence given to the advent finds its cause and its justification in the purpose of God to glorify his Son, the Son of man, in the place where He was despised and crucified, by making Him during the millennial ages the actual King and Governor of the world; by uniting in Him and under Him, in one eternal *unity*, all things in heaven and on the earth; by connecting with the morning of that great day, the judgment of the quick and the resurrection of the just; and with the evening of it, the general resurrection and judgment. In this way there is some sort of proportion between the advent and the prominence given to it in the Word; but if his coming be for the period of a single day only (of 12 or even 24 hours), and that to be expected at the end of some thousands of years, the prominence given to it in the New Testament seems to me an inconsistency, if not an absurdity.

(6.) Hope, buoyant, radiant hope is for the young, far more than for the aged and way-worn pilgrim. In the young, fresh apostolic churches this plant of Paradise (the only one remaining when the rest had withered) flourished beautifully, and brought forth fruit unto eternal life. No tongue can tell what influence a steady gaze at the crown and the kingdom, the person and glory of the coming Deliverer, exercises over the heart, life, and character. It is balm to our wounds, it is light in our darkness, it is strength in our weakness; it softens our hard materialism, it brightens the clouds of adversity, it darkens the brightness of the world's glory, it breaks the satanic chains that bind our hearts to the dust, by giving us a noble and glorious object to look up to; it draws up into itself, and, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all the minor hopes and expectations with which this earthly life is filled.

As the streams and rivers in whatever region rising, in whatever direction flowing, all make their way into the sea, so do the hearts of redeemed men, of all nations and ages, of all countries and colours, of all degrees of refinement and civilisation, flow unto and find their end and contentment in the ocean-home of Jehovah's love; and this love is no otherwise manifested to sinful man save in the person of his Son Jesus Christ; and this manifestation, though deepening, widening, and progressing always, is mainly connected with the

three appearances of Christ (Heb. ix. 24, 26, 28); his first appearance to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; his appearance now in the presence of God for us; and his future appearance the second time without sin unto salvation; thus are the past, the present, and the future united in Him who is not of time, but eternity; and his redeemed Church lays the hand of faith upon the cross, and stretches out the hand of hope towards the crown, and looks up in adoring love to a present intercessor in heaven.

In this light I read and re-read all the passages in the gospels and epistles which speak of the coming of Christ, of our readiness to meet Him, of the sleeping virgins, of the increasing wickedness towards the end, of the fury of Antichrist, of Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, of his coming in flaming fire, of his coming with all his saints, of his coming with the holy angels, of his coming in the power, glory, and majesty of God. When God says, "Watch," I thought we should watch; when He says, "Wait," we should wait; when He says, "Hope," we should hope; when He says, "Pray," we should pray; when He says, "Hasten the coming of the day of God," we should hasten it; for I rejected the spiritualising philosophy which loves the absence of Christ, and adds to all these duties a brief appendix to be retained in a reserved seat of the memory, or repeated in an undertone in the following manner: Wait for

the Son of God from heaven (after a thousand years); Behold I come as a thief (after a thousand years); Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him (after a thousand years); What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch (after a thousand years); Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly (after a thousand years).

I received as true and faithful all these calls to watch, and wait, and pray, unhampered by the necessary intervention of any long series of ages, and thus the nearness of His coming filled me with indescribable ecstasy, so that I sought the mountain tops of prophecy that I might catch if it were but the first faint gleams of the rising Sun of Righteousness. The King is coming; the King of glory is coming quickly; the wilderness shall soon begin to flourish, and Sharon's vale send forth its balmy odours; the thorn and the thistle shall yield to the myrtle tree and the cedar; the savage beasts of prey and the more savage beasts of science and civilisation shall forget their ferocity in those happy times; the thunders of the sky and the thunder of the battle-fields shall be heard no more, for He is come; the Prince of Peace is come, and wars shall cease to the ends of the earth.

I felt the mighty movements of an earthquake shaking the foundations of the goodly mountains of Lebanon; I measured the crater, and heard the roaring and saw the flames of Vesuvius; among

the ruins of mighty Rome I meditated like Volney on the ruins of empires, and then heard the Pope preach a bad sermon ; I stood upon the rock of Tyre with Keith's "Evidences of Prophecy" in my hand, and the fishermen spreading their nets before my eyes ; I saw the tears rolling down the cheeks of Jewish women as they read the Lamentations and sang their songs of sorrow at the foundation stones of their former beautiful house. I traversed the most famous battle-fields of modern Europe and summoned up before me the multitudes that fought and fell in those scenes of carnage, and I looked up to my Father in heaven and cried, "Eternal God, on what are thy creatures intent ? Is this thy world on which thy beloved Son stood in human form, yea, in the form of a servant, to be only or for ever the region of sin and death, and the delusions of the devil ?" And I heard a voice saying : "Burn and break forth through the earth's crust, ye phlegethons of internal fire ; loose the four winds and let them blow ; yea, open the caves of Æolus, and let all the winds out at once to mix sea and land together and desolate the world ; pour into the souls of the God-defying nations a strong delusion that they may believe a lie, because they received not the saving truth of God ; and let the unclean spirits go forth to gather them together for the great day of the Lord Almighty ; let the thunders of the heavens wax louder and louder as



at Sinai in the days of old, and let the infuriated followers of Antichrist and the devil answer it defiantly with blasphemy and rifled cannon! Unite, unite, unite, all ye elements of evil, and put forth all your strength in a last great effort of rebellion, for your time is short and the hour of your doom is ready to strike, for it is written, 'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; and he was cast out into the earth and his angels with him. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of the brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell therein. Woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' " (Rev. xii. 9-12.)

Then I thought of the gorgeous vision of the descending Lord with his white-robed armies, in Rev. xix.; the immersion of the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire; the imprisonment of Satan, the deceiver, in the bottomless pit; the resurrection of the saints, and the glories of the

peaceful millennial reign. No more fields of battle and blood ; no more delusions of the devil nor seductions of his agents ; no more curse stifling the earth's productiveness ; no more sweat on the brow of labour ; no more tears channelling the cheek of beauty ; no more Cains murdering their brothers ; no more death among the risen saints ; no more premature death anywhere. The whole world at peace ; the whole race of man one family of God ; the former things wholly forgotten ; the glories of Jerusalem wholly restored ; the whole glorious idea of God's plan of love in progress of actual manifestation among men ; the flaming sword removed from the gates of paradise ; and more than all, and better than all these together, the *presence of our Lord and King*.

O Jesus, Saviour of the world, come quickly ! The distracted world seeks peace, and cannot find it ; the parched wilderness seeks refreshing, and cannot find it ; the whole creation groans and looks out for Thee ; and thy Bride chides thy long delay. Come, blessed Lord and King, and let the knowledge of thy name cover the earth as the waters cover the bottom of the seas ! How love finds its home and its end in Thee ! I see Thee in the bosom of the great Father before all worlds ; I see Thee descending in the form of a servant, to the stable, to the cross, and to the grave ; I see Thee arising in my immortalised nature, the conqueror of Hades and of death ; I follow Thee from

Olivet to the right hand of God, and I anticipate thy coming again in glory and majesty, and in this immense circle all is *love*—love to the unloving, love to poor sinners, love to *me* !

Oh, how sweet and tranquilising is the luxury of being loved ! In those happy days of love's young dream of glory I entered into the hiding-place of love and power into which my Head, and Redeemer, and Forerunner had entered, and I felt no joy in anything that did not spring from or lead to his love. His finished work was the rock on which I stood ; his present work drew all my affections (so far as I could direct and control them) into his own royal person where He now is ; and his coming in glory filled, expanded, and satisfied my hope. My thoughts had, from my mother's death, been in a measure directed to the incarnation, atonement, and intercession of Christ as the everlasting verities on which a reasonable man can rest the issues of eternity ; and, by meditation and prayer, by much reading, and conversing with learned and godly men, the heart, naturally dwarfish and dark, was opening up, little by little, into sympathy with the dimensions of divine love ; when prophecy, which takes in the future eternity, and makes Jesus the centre of it, opening up visions of glory without limit or end, contributed mightily to this enlargement, and gave me higher and nobler conceptions of the character of God, the majesty of the office of Christ, the dignity of

redeemed manhood, and the exact truthfulness and inspiration of the Holy Scripture. Indeed, I may say I know no department of doctrine or duty, of philosophy or science, of morality or speculation, of the outward or the inner life, over which, in my case, the hope of the Advent did not exercise a paramount influence.

(7.) I shall mention only three of the important doctrines which it modified deeply and extensively, namely, the atonement, the assurance of faith, and the election of the saints.

I always believed firmly in the great sacrifice of the cross, but its tremendous importance in my own case was enhanced not a little by the nearness of the coming Judge. I crept nearer to the bleeding cross as I felt the day of God to be nearer; I grasped the anchor of my hope more firmly, as I saw the first indications of the stormy wind and tempest. The awful splendours that surround the King of Glory, the eyes as a flame of consuming fire, the pomp and majesty of the Royal court and train, the desire of being counted worthy to escape the coming judgments, and to stand before the Son of man (Luke xxi. 36); all these, and many similar thoughts concerning that great event, drove me with ten-fold ardour into the poor sinner's only refuge-city, the finished work of the Son of God on the cross.

Then, as to assurance of faith, the doctrine, I may say, of all the Reformers, condemned by the

Council of Trent as the "*Vana fiducia hereticorum*," the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, and, I believe, of the Episcopal Church also ; this holy doctrine was sleeping soundly in the Presbyterian Church ; or, at least, it was so in my heart and experience. This slumber was broken by the hope of the Advent. I saw plainly the terrible dilemma and perplexity into which the hope of the kingdom puts the soul that has any doubts of salvation. I stood almost petrified with terror, like Lot's wife, when I found myself saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," and yet was not fully convinced of my personal acceptance with God ! This tremendous inconsistency seemed to shiver my consciousness into fragments, and I said, in the earnestness of agony, "This state of things cannot remain ; I must have assurance, or give up the hope ; doubt, and the doctrine of the approaching Advent, do not hang together." And thus the Lord led me in his own time and way to the New Testament assurance of faith. I may add, that all the believers in the speedy coming of Christ, that I have met with, are also, believers in the necessity of the assurance of faith.

Well, but how did the hope of the Advent affect the doctrine of election ? The principle of election in some form or other must be admitted by every man who believes in the freedom and sovereignty of God. The Creator did not consult us—could not consult us—as to the proper form of the body,

or the necessary qualities of the mind ! He made us as He pleased, He placed us where He pleased, He redeemed us in the way he pleased. His own free royal wisdom determined and determines all things. The Bible, too, is full of election. Nevertheless, the results that seem to flow from it are to most minds accompanied with many perplexing difficulties. The advent removes most of these, if it does not dispel them altogether. This is not the last dispensation. A great change is to take place in the moral government of God, so far as this earth and the ærial heavens are concerned, and the new dispensation commences with the coming of Christ. Up to that we have election, and the principle holds good that "many are called, but few are chosen." From that time the principle is universality, and all men shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest ; and the earth shall be overflowing with righteousness, like the waves of the sea. In this way I saw election to be the basis of a church, as predestination is the basis of a providence, without which neither the one nor the other is conceivable.

Thus dispensational truth, connected with the advent, mitigates or removes the bitter thought connected with election, that the majority of the human species are destined to perish ; at least it did so in my own case, and I can speak only for myself. I believe the number of those that shall finally perish, as compared with the multitudes of

the redeemed, may bear some such a proportion to one another, as the number of criminals in our gaols bears to the peaceable inhabitants of the country; and this view I am able to entertain from the hope of the coming kingdom and the glories of the millennial reign.

(8.) But here you perplex me with the question, "What then were your qualifications for the interpretation of prophecy? Had you mastered March's Lectures on the Interpretation of Scripture? or Keith on the Fulfilled Prophecies? or the numerous rules concerning allegories, metaphors, double senses, &c, laid down in the admirable handbook of Dr. Angus? Did you read, learn, and inwardly digest the nine canons of Horne, or the twelve rules of prophetic interpretation given by the famous Dr. Pye Smith?"

Stop, stop, I beseech you, beloved brother, and do not confound me utterly. I will confess all; I will make a clean breast of it, in the hope and conviction that your generous mind will look mildly on the errors arising from the ignorance, the enthusiasm, or the impetuosity of youth.

1. First, then, I had read or mastered none of these admirable works. My heart, so far as prophecy was concerned, was a virgin soil, except so far as some floating traditions may have inclined it to the side of ecclesiastical views. But I had a very accurate acquaintance, at least theoretically, with the letter of the holy scripture. The Psalms of

David, in the rugged Scottish version, I had wholly committed to memory ; as to the words of the New Testament, I have often defied any fellow student to mention one text which I could not instantly turn to without a concordance. In fact, I thought, and often said, a concordance was useful only for the idle. I had an accurate acquaintance with the Hebrew, and a tolerable acquaintance with the Greek ; so that I was able with ease to read and understand both the Old and the New Testament in the original. These, with an honest desire after truth, were my only qualifications for the study of the scriptures generally, or the study of prophecy in particular. Forgive my presumption, dear brother, but such is the truth, and with sorrow I confess it.

2. I reasoned also in the following perverse and inconclusive manner :—The Bible is divine ; it is the revelation of the Holy God to His sinful creatures. Then it must be addressed to men in plain intelligible language, otherwise it would be useless to mankind in general. I am an intelligent man, a fair, moderate sample of fallen humanity. It is addressed to *me* ; it is my duty, therefore, to read and believe it, and by the grace of God I will do so. Such was the fatal conclusion which led me into all my delusions.

3. It was at or about this time (for I will confess all), that I took up a strange notion concerning rhetoric, metaphors, and figures of speech in



general. As man is not a pure spirit, but an embodied spirit, so, said I, is language the body of thought, and, to reach us strongly and effectively, it must be largely composed of figures. Our first efforts at language are in figures, and the ruder the notion, the more abundant are these figures, so that figured language is not the result of culture, which, on the contrary, as it becomes high and intellectual, seeks to diminish metaphor as much as possible.

An Indian chief at his national palaver, pours forth beautiful figures in copious streams ; while Demosthenes in his Oration for the Crown, uses only one figure, and that, the shortest possible (like a cloud); so that the highest effort of oratorical genius is to address man as a spirit in the language of pure reason. But a work written in such a style would be quite unsuited for mankind in general ; and the Bible, though its author be God, is yet written by common men, and addressed to common men, and in the common language of man. I expect, then, figures, and I find abundance of figures of all kinds ; and instead of confusing and perplexing me, they serve the very opposite purpose, for they are the grace and ornament of discourse, and serve to elucidate rather than obscure the current of thought. The forty names of Satan are almost all figurative, but that does not make me deny his personal agency ; the similar metaphors and figures of all kinds applied to

the coming of Christ in the flesh, and his earthly work are innumerable, and cause no confusion to the reader of the record. No, but the Lamb, and the Lion, the Rock of Ages, and the Morning Star, the Sun of Righteousness, and the Light of the World,—these, and all the rest, are mercifully intended to meet our weakness, and show forth the manifold fulness of the Son of God. The figures applied to the First Advent are far more numerous than those applied to the second, and they cause no perplexity to the reader. We *interpret* them all literally. He is the Rod from the stem of Jesse, and the Branch that grows out of his roots; He grows up as a root out of the dry ground, without form or comeliness; but these figures do not lead us to spiritualise His coming in the flesh. But I forget; it is only the second coming that is to be put in the spiritualising crucible, inasmuch as the language taken naturally would lead to the personal reign.

9. But as I am sure you are weary with these speculations of millenarian utopianism and misinterpretation, let us turn for a moment to the free, fresh, breezy region of spiritual exposition. And first, let us give a notable example of spiritualising from the scripture, and by a sainted scripture character, to show among other things, how an interpreter may, in prophecy, put one thing or person for another, as the Church for the Jewish nation, or the throne of God in heaven for the throne of David on earth.

The three most celebrated women, or princesses, mentioned in scripture, are without doubt, Eve, the mother of mankind, Sarah, the mother of the holy nation, and the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord. Sarah, the beautiful and obedient wife of Abraham, shall furnish us the example. The aged and venerable patriarch we suppose seated at the door of his tent, to enjoy the mild radiance of the evening sun, when Sarah, with gentle step and profound reverence, approaches, and in a private interloquitur, thus opens out her views on unfulfilled prophecy.

“ My dear husband and lord (1 Pet. iii. 6), you remember that the Lord promised by the mouth of his holy angel that I should have a son ; now we have waited full ten years, until you are as good as dead, and I am altogether dead (Rom. iv. 19), for the purpose of accomplishing that prophecy. We have, therefore, mistaken the meaning of the words by taking them in a literal sense ; it cannot have been the intention of God that the dead should have children, and therefore the meaning must be wholly spiritual : as then by me you can have no children, do you with my full consent take that excellent maid Hagar, as a secondary wife ; if she has children I will adopt them, and in that way the prophecy may be accomplished. It is better we should fulfil the prediction in our own way than leave it unfulfilled altogether.”

Now could there be a more admirable example

of spiritualising found in the whole volume of Scripture? Did not the church of the fourth century act on similar principles? They did; they said, "We have waited three hundred years for the personal coming of Christ, and the personal reign. We have waited long enough; we must have mistaken the prophetic oracles, which are to be spiritualised, so that the glories of Jerusalem, the kingdom of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the saints are to have their accomplishment in the extension and dominion of the Christian Church." Some time later they imitated Sarah's example still further, and forestalled the millennial kingdom by the device of the papacy, which is nothing else but an attempt to get, before the time and by human power and glory, an infallible authority on the earth, a visible centre for the nations to come to, and a royal priest upon the throne. If the Lord does not give us heavenly glory, we shall adopt the glory of the world; and since the promised advent is delayed, we shall do our best to make a millennial kingdom of our own. Hence the most advanced students of the historical and preterist school make Constantine's conversion the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, and consequently that the glorious millennial ages began with him, and ended with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, when the new heavens and the new earth were created by the destruction of the oriental

Church. This prophetic school is called the *historical*, and the only true *historical* school of prophetic interpreters, because the foundation of their system, that Nero is the Beast that was, and is not, and yet is, is based upon the popular *fiction* believed by some Romans that that bloody monarch, having been killed, came to life again, and was returning from the East raging with tenfold greater fury than before against the Christian Church, and the whole Roman people. This *fiction* is the basis of the whole *historical* system which in England, America, and Germany, is making such rapid progress; and certainly it deserves our highest admiration in many respects.

1. It shows us how an inspired apostle could make a popular delusion the centre of such noble and glorious visions. 2. If John believed this fiction of Nero's death and resurrection to be a fact, we see clearly how easily delusions, lies, tricks, false miracles, &c., can be consecrated to the glory of God (*blessed is he that readeth*). 3. If John did *not* believe this fiction, and yet used it as a truth, and made it the basis of his delineation of the Beast, he yielded his convictions to popular prejudice, and thereby shows us, by way of contrast, that truth is more valuable than rubies, and that a truly Christian man should never conceal his convictions. 4. This fictitious-historical system destroys utterly the vain, carnal, presumptuous speculations of the Millenarians seeing the mil-

lennium is long past and gone. 5. All the passages in the Apocalypse, and many others that refer to the coming of Christ, were fulfilled in the conversion of Constantine. 6. As the millennium began with Constantine, and ended by the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the chief actors in those ages of glory were, in Europe, the popish church of the middle ages, and in the East, the reign of the Saracens in the two great empires of the Omyades in Damascus, and the Abassades in Bagdad. 7. Finally, I cannot tell how my mind is impressed, and my fancy captivated, when I think of the amount of noble writing, of learned research, and historical demonstration with which sanctified genius has surrounded and embellished the fiction of Nero's death and resurrection. The wrath of Achilles developed into an Iliad is nothing to it! The last and most learned work I read on this subject contains nearly 900 pages, and as I looked upon the stately volume I could have almost applied to it the fine words of the Roman poet, "*Mures parturiunt et nascitur altissimus mons.*" In fact, we may say with Davidson, that the great work of Elliott, and all the works of the year-day expositors, as well as the innumerable publications of the Futurists, though characterised by great research and minute investigation, are essentially and fundamentally erroneous, because they are not based historically on the death and resurrection of Nero, the Beast that was not and yet is.

(10.) I am heartily glad that, in these confessions, I am gradually getting away from the Millenarians and their carnal conceptions, into the free, boundless, healthy wilderness of spiritual exposition. Leave them, leave them among the brick-kilns, under their Pharaoh of verbalism, building up their pyramid according to the letter, and eating the leeks, onions, and garlic of verbal or literal interpretation. I pity such men, they are the slaves of a sentiment, the drudges of minute hermeneutics, who, surrounded by lexicons, concordances, versions, manuscripts, &c., imagine that, by gazing at *mappik*, *dagesh-forte*, or *vav conversive*, they can find out the ways of providence, and map out the pilgrim's chart to the kingdom of glory. They would write volumes like Middleton on the Greek *ho*, to defend such passages as Eph. v. 5, Titus ii. 13, Jude 4; they would, like the sophistical Greeks of old, divide the Christian Church and set the world on fire for the difference between *Homo* and *Homoi*; they ponder and elucidate such clauses as the famous "Filioque;" the number 666 is a special favourite with them; their love for this kind of small criticism is boundless, and if there be anything which they specially hate, it is the Beasts mentioned in Scripture.

The fundamental error of their system is their looking to words, words, words, in their expositions of Holy Scripture. Every chapter must be taken ;

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every verse, every clause, every line, every letter, in this rigid system, must be carefully examined in order to get the meaning ; and then the ideas, when you get them, are so bound up in the signification of the words that there is no expansiveness in them, so that they cannot be applied to great masses of people, and large systems of providence.

Now, our system of spiritualising avoids very wisely the exposition of *texts*, and is mainly occupied with extracting one great spiritual idea from a chapter or even a book, and applying it as occasion serves to the wants of the Church. Like the Jews themselves, the prophecies that belong to them are very interesting in the *mass*, but very perplexing when you come to deal with them in *detail* ; and it is fortunate for us that detail is not necessary in the spiritualising system. All the threatenings of the prophets are fulfilled or about to be fulfilled in the Jews ; all the promises to Israel and Jerusalem, and the Mount of Zion, are fulfilled or about to be fulfilled in the Church ; the division of the nation by the Jordan refers to the Eastern and Western churches, the Jordan itself is the Bosphorus, and the twelve tribes are the twelve great divisions of Christendom.

The late famous Dr. Arnold has done good service to the spiritualists in his two sermons on prophecy, by showing that *no* prophecy ever has been or ever will be literally fulfilled, and that the whole purpose or end of prophecy is simply to show that good will



finally prevail over evil, of which grand consummation we have the proof and confirmation in the resurrection of Christ. What a deliverance from detail! The promises are too good for any thing that has been or is to be upon earth, and therefore have their fulfilment only in heaven; the threatenings against the enemies, Babylon and the Beast, are too terrible for any system that has been or is to be on the earth, and therefore they shall have their fulfilment in hell. Let us then refer the promises and threatenings to heaven and hell, and be done with them! It would break the heart of a stone and consume the eyes of a saint, to classify and interpret all the particular prophecies from the seed of the woman in Eden till the sounding of the last trump! When, therefore, the Millenarians call for texts, texts,—“Show us the positive texts for a spiritual reign, and the conversion of all nations by the preaching of the gospel, and the coming of Christ after a thousand years,”—we answer, “Texts are not necessary; verbal criticism establishes nothing; the great authority has said that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life; and, therefore, we seize the spirit that breathes and burns in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the prophets, and apply it to that great institution of Christ, the Church, which is the dispensation of the Spirit, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

The glorious promises given to Jerusalem and the Jewish nation; the elevation of the mountain of

the Lord above the tops of the mountains, the union of the divided nation under one king; the living waters flowing from the threshold of the holy house; the dominion and glory above all other nations promised to Israel; the Shekinah glory, overshadowing the dwellings of Jerusalem; the name of the restored city, Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there; the nations going up to keep the feast of tabernacles; the throne of God in Jerusalem, where He will make the place of His feet glorious—these and multitudes of similar promises and prophecies, both in the Old and New Testament, have their complete and final fulfilment in the Church; and the Church enlarged and spiritualised is the millennium, is the regeneration, is the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, is the adoption for which creation groans, is the imprisonment and prisoner of the devil, is the first resurrection in which the blessed and holy have a part. All these long and great lines of prophetic analogies meet in the Church, and we can easily dispense with more particular texts, words, and clauses, which we can safely leave in the hands of verbalists and phrase-mongers.

Yet our opponents are obstinate, and repeat and call for texts *ad nauseam*. Only think what an impudent Millenarian said to me the other day, as I was illustrating our principle of taking the spirit of large passages instead of dwelling on texts in detail: he told me to my face, that I reminded him

of an ass eating thistles, whose habit is to chew what he can, and spit out the remainder. I kept my temper, but I assure you, dear brother, that in such cases it is not easy.

(11.) Let us now for a moment glance at a few texts of holy scripture, that you may see the difference between the natural or literal and the more spiritual and sublime exposition of the divine word. The prophet Daniel reveals to us the kingdom of the **STONE**, cut out without hands (ii. 44, 45), which smites the great image on the feet of it, and breaks all the kingdoms into fragments, and scatters the materials of which they are composed to the winds like the dust of the thrashing-floor (ii. 35), while the kingdom of the stone itself, the kingdom of the God of heaven, fills the whole earth. Now literally, or naturally, this means the forceful and irresistible agency of God in taking vengeance on apostate nations, and destroying them utterly and suddenly, like the action of a sling-stone, or the winged bolts of thunder; but spiritually it means the conversion of the nations, taking place, not nationally, but individually, and proceeding slowly and gradually, like the growth of the oak, or the course of a stream. Thus are the metallic kingdoms to be scattered to the winds like the dust of the thrashing-floor! So, in the second psalm, and many other psalms, the iron rod of Jehovah's wrath, with which the Son is to break the heathen nations to pieces like a potter's vessel

when spiritually interpreted, means the action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, even as the Lord opened the heart of Lydia; so that the iron rod denotes *grace*, as the golden sceptre probably denotes *vengeance* (Est. v. 2); for it is a known principle that on occasions we should expound by contraries; as, for example, in Dan. vii. 13, the *coming* of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven to receive the kingdom, and dominion, and glory of all the nations under the whole heaven, when spiritually interpreted, means, the *going* of the Son of Man into heaven in a single cloud to intercede at the right hand of God. This sublime chapter of Daniel (vii.) was one of the first passages of scripture which led me into the delusion that these nations and kingdoms under the whole heaven were earthly nations and kingdoms, and not the angels of God in heaven.

Many people now, among the literalists especially, make a great matter of the gathering together of the saints in the air, when He comes in his glory, and to this they refer a multitude of passages, such as the following:—Ps. l. 5; Is. xiii. 3; Joel iii. 11; Matt. xxiv. 31; Luke xxi. 36; 1 Thess. iv. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 51. All these scriptures, and some others as well, they apply to the grand and final union of the Church in resurrection glory with her glorious Husband and Head; and this meeting, they say, is to take place in the air, in great glory and majesty, with

the sound of the trumpet, and the overshadowing glory of the eternal God. But the famous Dr. Whitby—Whitby of the points, not the Hebrew points, which are many, but the Calvinistic, which are five—has beautifully applied this gathering of the saints (2 Thess. ii. 1) to the union of the Jewish and Gentile converts in churches after the temple-worship was finally destroyed.

What an effort in the way of spiritualisation! It equals Origen, and unfolds a new principle—that of spiritualising *backwards*, by which means, when refuting the millenarian texts, we are at liberty, not only to spiritualise earthly things into heavenly realities, but also heavenly things into an earthly and material signification. He that wishes to see Calvinism refuted, the doctrine of the millennium annihilated, the imputed righteousness of Christ overthrown, should read the works of that great and learned leader of anti-millenarian spiritualising.

(12.) One does not soon tire in contemplating objects that are great and glorious in the natural world; the majestic movements of the stars, the silent course of a noble river like the Nile or the Danube, the baptism of beauty which clothes the hills and the valleys with splendour in the freshness of spring, when the rising sun “tricks his orient beams, and flames in the forehead of the morning sky,”—these, and such like movements and manifestations of the Creator, expand and

elevate our thoughts, exalt while they satisfy the imagination, dilate while they, in some measure, purify the heart, and stimulate our reason to search after (*rerum cognoscere causas*) the character of their adorable Author. We do not easily tire in admiring them, and, though old as the ages of time, their freshness and attraction are ever new. It is so also with the works of human genius. Shakespeare and Bunyan, the two great dramatists of our nation, though read by millions, have not lost their flavour by the course of time. *Robinson Crusoe* I have read at least ten times, and I intend to read it again; and so of our great poets in general (*the immortal five*), and all our literary heroes. We read, and read, and never tire reading.

It is in this spirit of admiration that for some months I have been collecting the efforts of human genius, to extract anything like a spiritual meaning out of that obscure passage of scripture, Acts iii. 19, 21. Repeat the passage: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come (Greek) from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Now there is a sense in these words that lies clear and consis-

tent on the very surface, if, like the blinded Millenarians, we were to follow the letter; and this delusive material literal sense may be collected in the following propositions:—

1. The Jewish nation and people are to be converted when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

2. These times of refreshing are connected with the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, is now in the heavens at the right hand of God.

4. In the heavens he will stay until the times of the restitution of all things arrive, and then he will come and restore all things, according to the testimony of all the prophets since the world began.

Such is the natural meaning of the words: but such a view of the passage is altogether inadmissible, for the following reasons:—First, there is no reference to the moral, the spiritual, the metaphorical, and the anagogical meanings. The literal is the only one given, and that, according to Origen, is always unfruitful, often contradictory, and sometimes absurd. Secondly, the literal exposition connects together the four great events—the conversion of the Jewish nation, the times of refreshing, the coming of Christ, and the restitution of all things; but this would lead us to the absurdities of the millennial reign, which we can

never admit. Thirdly, the coming of Christ is here said to be to restore all things, which we totally deny, for the end of his advent is to burn up the world and remove his people to some safer habitation.

Let us now leave the superficial millenarian exposition, that we may have leisure, and all our faculties collected, to admire the genius which extracts from this passage, like wine from the grapes, by pressure, a more noble, consistent, and spiritual signification. As this is a great controversy and a high, notable argument, we shall state the principles thereof in clear chronological order.

First, then, the passage probably does not refer to the Jewish nation at all; but if it does, we deny that it, or any other passage, connects their conversion with the coming of Christ. See Rom. xi. 26.

Secondly, we deny utterly, from this passage and from all passages, that, so far as this earth is concerned, there can possibly be either times of refreshing or times of restitution connected with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes not as the restorer, but the destroyer.

Thirdly, we change the word *restitution* for *fulfilment* or *fulfilling*, though no such meaning is given in any one lexicon, nor in any one passage of the New Testament, nor in any translation or version of the Scripture. That, however, need



not hinder us, in cases of necessity, from giving such a meaning as suits our holy traditions.

Fourthly, the word *till* in the English language, as in the Greek, means not only *up to* a certain event, but also to the period when the event is *ended*; thus the heavens receive Jesus Christ *till* the times of the restitution or fulfilment of all things, that is, *till after* the times of fulfilment are ended. So we say, in conversation, "I shall not leave Russia till the season of fine weather," that is, till the fine weather is ended; "I shall not leave my business for recreation at Bath till the time of the bathing season," that is, till the bathing season is *ended*; "I shall not come to London till the time of the discussions of parliament," that is, till all these discussions are *over*. In this sense, the Regenerator comes when the regeneration is over, Matt. xix. 28; and the Restorer when all things are restored; and the Fulfiller when the times of fulfilment are past and gone. In like manner the King comes, not to take the kingdom (Dan vii. 14) and dominion under the whole heaven, but *after* all the kingdoms under the whole heaven have ended for ever. Even so we should say, the heavens shall receive Jesus Christ *till* the times of the great day of judgment, that is, till the judgment-day is *over*, and then, like a head-inspector, he shall pay us an amateur visit to see that the work of judgment has been properly executed (O Lord, have mercy on us! Christ, have

mercy on us! Amen); and the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. viii. 19), for which the whole creation waiteth, shall not take place till ages after the groans of creation are ended; and the angel with the key and the chain shall not descend from heaven *at* the time of the imprisonment of Satan, but *after* he is safely locked up (*qui facit per alterum facit per se*, i.e. *facit per ecclesiam*): and finally, the Saviour does not descend from the heavens with the armies of his strength *at* the time of the treading of the wine-press, and the gathering of the fowls of heaven to the supper of the great God, and the immersion of the Beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire, but *after* all these events have been accomplished. (Rev. xix.)

Fifthly, if any one objects that we give a new meaning to the word *until*, I ask is this not allowed? Does not Horace assure us that the meaning of words is entirely regulated by usage? There is no reason in the nature of things why the Greek *achri* should not mean *till after*, as well as simply *until*; or that our word *at* should not signify *after*, if we choose to use it in that sense. Nor need you quote against me the saying of some timber-headed old Roman, that Augustus in the plenitude of his power could not change the signification of a single word in the Latin language. For, be it remembered, Augustus was a heathen, and might not be able to accomplish what a Christian can; and a learned doctor might be able to

accomplish what an emperor could not ; and also, what might be true of the stiff, cumbrous Latin language, might possibly be false in the more pliable and less fully formed English. Besides, the Latin has no article, which makes a great difference. We are, in fact, changing the signification of words continually, and we have three great manufactories, utterly unknown to the Romans, for fabricating new words, and polishing and renewing the old. A Scotch murderer has done for our language what Augustus could not do for the Latin—he has given us a new verb, which is surely as difficult as to alter the meaning of an old one. I propose, then, to the committee of language, that in all time coming, *until* shall have the signification of *till after*, and so the text we are expounding shall be explained in the spiritual sense, “Whom the heavens must receive *until after* the times of the restitution of all things, which God has spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

(13.) Besides these spiritual expositions, there are very many arguments of a more popular kind, which we should never cease to urge against the Millenarians, kindly but perseveringly, if by any means they might be led to higher, clearer, and more spiritual principles of biblical interpretation. I would urge upon them to consider well the weighty words of the learned Dr. Pusey on this subject :—

“It is a vulgar and common place prejudice which would measure everything by its own habits of mind, and condemn that as fanciful to which they are unaccustomed, simply because it, confined and contracted by treading its own matter-of-fact round, cannot expand itself to receive it, or has no power to assimilate to its own previous notions, or adapt them to it. It is the same habit which would laugh at one who came from a foreign clime in a garb to which a peasant eye is unwonted. ‘He who laughs first,’ says Dr. Johnson, ‘is the barbarian.’ A deeper philosophy sees harmony where the unobservant sees only discord. It were absurd for the short-sighted and unpractised (say the Millenarians) to deny the existence of what themselves see not ; what one of practised sight sees *is* there, although such as have been inured all their lives to look on the surface of the ground close before them, see it not. The horses and chariots of fire were round about Elisha, although his servant saw them not, until, at the prophet’s prayer, the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw what the seer had all along seen. The angel of the Lord stood three times in the way to withstand Balaam, and the ass saw him, though the prophet saw not, but smote the ass who saved him from being slain, until the Lord, who had opened the mouth of the dumb ass, speaking with man’s voice to forbid the madness of the prophet, opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of God

standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand. The voice came really from the cloud, although they who had no ears to hear said it thundered. Saul heard the voice of Him whom he was persecuting, though those who were with him heard only an indistinct voice, and saw no man. And not in cases only of extraordinary revelations, but as an universal rule, St. Paul says, 'The carnal man cannot discern the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned.' It may be that systems of interpretation, which are now almost universally abandoned, are true, however foreign they may be to our notions, or though to us, as being foreign, they must at first needs seem fanciful."

Now this contains exactly my ideas, though I might not be able to state them so clearly. The literalists are sworn enemies to fanciful systems of interpretation, however true they may be; nor are they enabled to discern the beauty of the large, generous system of exposition, because they keep looking constantly to the ground, and seek to connect the prophecies with time, place, person, and circumstance, so that their universality is entirely destroyed; they see no coming of Christ with the clouds of heaven at the conversion of Constantine, or at the day of Pentecost, or the siege of Jerusalem; they see only an ass in the way where we see an angel; where we hear the voice of grace and mercy, they hear only thunder

and wrath. When you come into contact with them, your position is like that of Goldsmith's Traveller, pointing out from a mountain-top the scenery of Europe to a company of blind men ; or Cicero in the forum, pleading before an audience of the deaf and dumb. They lack the necessary faculty, and your arguments appeal to them in vain.

In the progress of art, which is the imitation of nature ; in the mechanical improvements which in modern times have facilitated intercourse, and adorned human life so wonderfully ; in the ceaseless activity which leads men everywhere into all kinds of danger for the sake of gain ; in the enormous wealth which is accumulated in the hands of the few by the blood and sweat of the many ; in the genius which measures the orbits of the stars, or digs up truth from the bowels of the earth like our geologists, or analyses humanity till it arrives at the monkey ; in the benevolent discovery of Friar Bacon, with all the improvements and discoveries to which it has given rise, from the iron ram-rods of the old Desaner to the needle-gun and the rifled cannon ;—I may say in one word, that in all the tendencies of the present age, all the glories of the nineteenth century, and all the boasted triumphs of the Anglo-Saxon race, the literalists fail to discover the spiritual principles which are leading us gradually but swiftly into millennial blessedness. Science was never so victorious over

nature ; literature was never, since the beginning of the world, so diffused as at present ; politics has actually become a science, and power is rapidly proceeding, according to the eternal law of development, from the one to the few, from the few to the many, and from the many to all ; old prejudices and superannuated systems of religion, philosophy, and life are passing rapidly away like dissolving views, and the nations are beginning to arm and to love one another. To all these signs of the coming glory, the literalists are perfectly blind or indifferent ; and they even say, and write, and print it in books, that nature does not lead to grace (Eph. ii. 1-5), that philosophers may possibly be infidels, that gain may possibly be acquired and possessed without godliness, that civilisation is not the introduction to the kingdom of heaven, that Alcibiades and Nebuchadnezzar were as unlike Christ as the savage Carib or the wild Indian, and that it is not likely that the arming of the nations, or the improvements of Friar Bacon's discovery, will make wars to cease to the end of the world. But let it be remembered they lack the spiritual sense of Origen (anagogy), and therefore it would be absurd to expect from them the clear, penetrating vision of the true spiritualisers.

(14.) In the quotation given above from Dr. Pusey, reference is made to 1 Cor. ii. 14 (which he renders *carnal* instead of *natural*), from which, as well as from many others, we may draw a very

general and popular argument against the Millenarians. It was used against myself with great effect in my younger days. I remember on one occasion, when dining with a venerable elder, who had been long a faithful pillar in the Church, that the subject of conversation turned to prophecy ; and as I was in those days somewhat suspected of heresy, he asked me to explain my views. He listened with great patience, and much indulgence for my youth and inexperience, till I came to Rev. v. 10, from which I argued that he himself would become a Millenarian as soon as he died and went to heaven, for that all the inhabitants of that holy place redeemed from the nations by the blood of the Lamb, longed to have their thrones of celestial glory, that they might reign with their Saviour on the earth ; then, laying down his knife and fork, and looking me steadfastly in the face, he replied in words of great earnestness and solemnity, “ Mr. G. you are a carnal man ! ”—a reply which has been sounded in my ears a thousand times since, and which we should never cease to urge upon our Millenarian brethren. Say to them decidedly, but kindly, “ You are carnal men ; your system is carnal ; your hopes are earthly and carnal ; your interpretations of holy Scripture are material and carnal ; the resurrection of the flesh which you teach is a carnal doctrine ; you degrade the glorified saints by bringing them to the earth again, and that is carnal ; you bring the angels,



not to visit us occasionally, as angel-visits ought to be, but into close and perpetual contact with men, and that is carnal ; you remove the material curse from the earth and restore again the literal throne of David, and combine the earthly and the heavenly—angels, glorified saints, and mortal men, under one head, and that is carnal. A millennium whose centre is the personal visible God-Man, ruling from this earth over the created worlds, must certainly in its main elements be essentially carnal. How different is the spiritual millennium which we expect ! Civilisation shall conquer all the savage tribes of men ; railways and electric telegraphs shall multiply the means of communication indefinitely ; the gospel shall be more faithfully preached and more generally believed ; and the different sections of the Christian Church shall, I hope, all become Presbyterians ; or at the least, like Pyramus and Thisbe, they shall kiss one another through their partition walls. This is the true millennium of reason, of Scripture, and of the spiritual mind. This we can long for, and hope for, and labour for, without the fear of disturbing the processes of nature and history by anything so awful as the coming of the Son of God. *All things continue as they were from the beginning of the world, and so shall they continue, notwithstanding the dreams of the Millenarians !* ”

(15.) I shall conclude this too long letter, dear brother, by urging you to press home upon the

hearts of our carnal brethren another argument, which, if fairly stated in a lucid, logical manner, can hardly fail to bring conviction. It has often been urged against myself, often announced from the pulpit, and often printed in books, yet all this has failed to give it the currency which its importance requires. It is this that in their system tends to destroy missionary exertion, and superinduce over the Church of Christ the spirit of slumber and indifference. The Saviour, on retiring to His heavenly glory, left His church a certain work to do ; and the main object of the Church is, or ought to be, to do it. *We* allow a sufficient time, some more and some less ; say, as a dear brother lately said to me, that it might be ten thousand years before the Lord comes ; and another, putting a day for a year, puts off the advent for 365,000 years. This, I say, gives time, a long glorious time, to work and fulfil the intentions of Christ. Now the Millenarians say the time is short, and thus their theory (read the *Wealth of Nations*, or any of the modern works on political economy) destroys the essential law of labour, which is, that the longer the time we have, the more diligent are we to get our work soon finished. It destroys, or nearly destroys, the principle of hope, by bringing its object so near that we almost see it ; and what we see we cannot hope for. It contradicts the very nature of the human will, which always increases its activity in proportion to the smallness

and distance of the motives. It contradicts the material law of physics, which is, that the greater the quantity the richer the quality; it contradicts the fundamental law of logic (see the *Predicabilia* of Aristotle) in regard to genus and species, which is, that the greater the extension the greater the comprehension; it contradicts—But, dear brother, it would be endless to mention all the evils which this theory occasions, and for your clear logical mind I may hope that I have said more than enough. Let us then be diligent, for the time is long.

Yours truly, in the hope of the coming glory at the end of 365,000 years.

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## CONFESSION THE THIRD.

**I**T is not, dear brother, with any ambitious designs, or any longing after either present or posthumous fame, that I make these Confessions; but simply because truth is valuable, and I wish to act out the convictions of my conscience. I can never, in these confessions, expect to rival, much less surpass, Augustine and J. J. Rousseau. My aim is a more humble one, which is, as far as possible to oppose the literal interpretation of Scripture, and thus raise up a barrier to the progress of fanaticism of all kinds, and especially to the fanaticism of the Millenarians. But let me recapitulate a little, that we may see whereto we have attained, and how we may proceed still farther on the same path of liberal and spiritual exegesis.

(1.) We have seen that Origen invented the spiritualising method, giving to every passage a threefold signification, corresponding with the body, soul, and spirit of a man; and these methods

he named the literal, the moral, and the spiritual. The literal is clear and distinct, always of minor importance, often unproductive and even absurd. The moral is attainable by the common understanding ; but the spiritual is deep and hidden, seen only by the spiritual eye, heard only by the spiritual ear, caught only by the spiritual hand—a depth of divine profundity which the spiritualising faculty alone can fathom, and which the most spiritual cannot fathom fully. Let this principle be fully developed in your mind, and you will be able to steer clear of all the absurdities of the literalists ; your course will be calm and serene ; not in the earthly atmosphere of clouds and storms, of historical monuments and geographical facts, but the celestial course of the eagle, in which no vulgar materialism impedes you, no mists darken your spiritual vision, and no rude literalist can interfere with your spiritual interpretations. By means of this spiritual faculty, we have already attained to the following and many other similar principles of exposition :—

1. That all the threatenings suspended over the Jewish nation are to be taken in a literal sense, and all the promises are to be taken figuratively, and applied to the Christian Church.

2. That Jerusalem, in the prophets, does not mean the city of history, to be restored, rebuilt, and re-inhabited by the restored nation, but the true New Jerusalem, which is the Christian

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Church. All the glories that surround the prophetic Jerusalem are to be transferred to the Christian Church. We may allow the Jews the threatenings and the curse, for their sins deserve them ; but the blessings, as it is natural, we appropriate to ourselves.

3. By this principle, we have seen that the *first* resurrection, which is blessed and holy (Rev. xx.), the resurrection of the just (Luke xiv. 14), the resurrection which is limited to the children of God (Luke xx. 36), is to be spiritualised into a great revival of the true religion, now expected to take place ; but that the *second* resurrection at the end of the thousand years is to be taken in the literal sense ; the first is spiritual, and the second literal : but in the restoration of the Jews we are to reverse this order, and as we know that their *first* restoration was literal, so we say their *second* restoration (Is. xi.), which the Lord is setting his hand to accomplish, is spiritual, and signifies simply the incorporation of the Jews with the Christian Church. In resurrection, the *first* is spiritual, and the *second* literal ; in restoration, the *first* is literal, and the *second* spiritual : —so varied, so elastic, so many-sided is this principle of spiritualising.

4. In like manner, also, but with a fresh variety, we have seen that, the *first* coming of Christ is literal, his coming as the incarnate Redeemer ; his *second* coming, which took place in the days

of Titus Vespasian, when he destroyed the holy city of Jerusalem, was spiritual; but his *third* coming, to judge the world, is to be literal; so you see how finely the spiritualising principle suits itself to every emergency, and always brings you off victorious. In any given series of events which are spoken of as succeeding one another in regular order, you can spiritualise the first, and literalise the second; you can spiritualise the second, and literalise the first; or you can literalise the first and third, and spiritualise the second;—according as it suits your convictions and the traditions of the church.

5. By this principle we can easily dispose of Luke i. 31, 32, and all similar passages. In this passage the angel gives two gracious promises; the *first* is the promise of a supernatural son, Jesus, the virgin's son, the incarnate God and Saviour of the world; the *second* is that "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Here would be a great difficulty, if we had not the spiritual faculty; for in the same passage we have the promise of the Incarnation and the Reign on the throne of David, and they would seem to be taken in the same sense; and this is, in fact, what the Millenarians do: they say, that as Jesus, the Son of God, became incarnate in a literal sense, so he shall reign on the

throne of David in a literal sense also. But to us there is no difficulty, for our spiritualising system enables us at once to say, "The *first* promise is literal, and the *second* is spiritual; his Incarnation was a real fact, connected with person and place, history and geography, time and circumstance; but David is a spiritual quantity, the house of Jacob does not mean the Jews, the descendants of that patriarch, but the church; and the throne of David has no reference to Jerusalem, Palestine, or the Jewish nation, but, when spiritualised, denotes the present mediatorial dominion of Christ at the right hand of God.

6. And this illustrates another of our principles; which is, that history and prophecy are to be interpreted on fundamentally different principles. The first part of Luke i. 31, 32, has become *history*, and we know it is literal; but the second part is still *prophecy*, and we are at liberty to spiritualise it. It is true the advanced rationalists apply our principle to the first as well as the second, and spiritualise *both* the Incarnation and the *Reign*; but we as yet do not agree with them, but hold to our principle of spiritualising the reign only. These few hints will serve to remind you of the previous Confessions, and the results which seem naturally to flow from our spiritualising system of interpretation.

(2.) But there are some remarkable *coincidences* peculiar to our principles and worthy of your



serious consideration. Let me note down a few of them, and leave the remainder to your own investigation.

Read over the following passages in English, or in the Greek, which is better:—Matt. xii. 13, xvii. 11; Acts i. 6; Mark iii. 25; Luke vi. 10; Mark ix. 12; Heb. xiii. 19; and you observe there is a verb used which signifies in every case *to restore to a former condition*. In Acts iii. 21, the derivative noun is used, and our translators have rendered it by *restitution*, which is nearly the same as restoration, and agrees with the usage of the verb in the other parts of scripture. This, however, makes for the Millenarians, who speculate about the restitution of all things, the resurrection of the saints, and the times of refreshing at the coming of the Lord. This gordian knot we can cut to pieces by two very simple spiritual acts which the conscience, in case of necessity, can be brought to, and which illustrate the liberty of evangelical interpretation, as the Germans phrase it. Just take the pen, and put the word *fulfilment* in the place of *restitution*, and insert the word *after*, so that the passage will read thus, “He shall send Jesus Christ, whom the heavens must receive till AFTER the times of the FULFILMENT of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” This brings out the idea that Christ does not come till all things spoken of by the

prophets have been actually fulfilled, which agrees with our ecclesiastical traditions. Thus he does not come to restore, but to destroy; not to bring the times of refreshing, but to burn up the globe and terminate the human species. This clears the passage of all obscurity, and breaks to pieces one of the strongholds of Millenarianism.

The advent of Christ is often spoken of in the parables and the gospels, and generally it signifies his proper personal advent. Thus, in the sower (Matt. xiii.), it is literal when "the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all that offend and them that do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth;" it is literal when He, "the Son of Man, shall come in the glory of the Father with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27); it is a literal coming when Jesus, the King of Glory, comes in to see the invited guests, and casts out the unprofitable servant who has not put on the wedding garment, Matt. xxii. 13; the coming to separate the wise and foolish virgins is literal, Matt. xxv. 13; the Lord of the servants to whom he gave the talents comes literally, after a long time, to punish and reward them according to their works, Matt. xxv. 19; and certainly the Son of Man coming in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, to separate the sheep and the goats, is the literal personal

coming, Matt. xxv. 31. Indeed, I may say, the coming is everywhere literal, save in the one chapter which describes it more circumstantially than all the rest put together, and in the one passage especially which enters into details. Read the following fine passage, and spiritualise it as you read :—

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken : and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven ; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matt. xxiv. 29-31.)

Do you understand the deep mystical meaning of these splendid symbols? No—you do not? Then, I will tell you, for I learned it from a celebrated doctor, who had attained to Origen’s analogical degree in the school of spiritualising, and it is this :—The darkening of the sun and moon, the shaking of the heavens and the falling of the stars, the sounding of the trumpet, the gathering of the elect from the four winds, and the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, all had

their accomplishment in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and the Roman army. It might appear to some carnal minds that the description was too glorious for the event described, and that there was nothing exceedingly spiritual in Titus and his armies (at least history does not mention it); but such should remember two things: first, that this is the traditionary exposition consecrated by the wisdom of the elders; and secondly, that this spiritualising of the passage is necessary in order to meet and refute the opinions of the earthly-minded and fanatical Millenarians, who seek to find a personal coming of Christ almost everywhere in the New Testament.

Look now for a moment at the use of two words in the Epistles of Paul, and see what a sharp-cutting flexible instrument the principle of spiritualising scripture is when used by a steady, resolute hand. The word *epiphaneia*, appearance, brightness, epiphany, is found in the following passages, 2 Thess. ii. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. i. 10, iv. 1, 8; and in all these, with *one* exception, it means the literal personal appearing of the Son of Man in his glory; *parousia*, coming, presence, arrival, advent, occurs in the following Scriptures, and in every instance except *one* it denotes the literal coming or presence of the person or thing spoken of—Matt. xxiv. 3, 27; 1 Cor. xv. 23, xvi. 17; 2 Cor. vii. 6, 7, x. 10; Phil. i. 26, ii. 12; 1 Thess. ii. 19, iii. 13, iv. 15; 2 Thess. ii. 1, 8, 9; Jas.

v. 7, 8 ; 2 Pet. i. 16, iii. 4, 12. Now mark the marvels connected with these two words, and learn the importance of the spiritualising principle in our controversy with the Millenarians. First, then, in every instance where they occur *separately*, they are to be taken literally; but when they meet together in the same verse, they, like accomplished duellists, destroy each other bodily, and nothing but the spirit remains; we are, therefore, in 2 Thess. ii. 8, to interpret them both in a sublime and spiritual manner, so that there is no actual coming of Christ in the passage. Secondly, I hold it to be a very remarkable circumstance, and a beautiful coincidence, that the passage (2 Thess. ii. 8), where the meeting of the two literal words spiritualises them, is one which, if taken in the ordinary literal sense, would prove the premillennial advent of Christ, and give some basis to the millenarian theory. The man of sin is not to be destroyed by the brightness of the coming of the Lord Jesus in his personal glory, but by the preaching of the gospel he is to be spiritually destroyed—that is, converted to the true religion,—and then cast into the spiritual lake of fire. (Rev. xix. 20.)

I hope you see now, dear brother, the importance of the spiritualising principle of interpretation, and the extent to which it can be applied. It is the hammer for breaking to pieces the delusions of fanaticism, and bringing into harmony the holy scriptures and our traditions. By it we ascend

through the earth-crust of mere materialism, verbalism, literalism, and textual criticism into the serene region of spiritualism, in which the fancy is delivered from the fixtures of time and place, person and circumstance, history and geography. The position of the literalist is accessible, ours is impregnable; for, as the spiritual meanings of a text vary according to the faculty of the expositor, we can, as soon as one position is in danger, very easily remove to another.

I do not think it at all strange, dear brother, that you are troubled by Rev. v. 5-10. I was myself in the same predicament when I was bound to the letter, and it certainly requires some effort to remove out of the passage the hope of reigning with Christ on the earth. The song is the song of the redeemed, their position is heaven, and their state is glory; yet they end their song with—"Thou hast made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign on the earth." Do they then wish to leave heaven, and come with Christ to reign on the earth? The words taken literally seem to say so; but, as we cannot suppose such a low hope to animate the heavenly hosts, we must look for a better and more spiritual interpretation. Now, the key to this and many similar difficulties will be found in Luke i. 32, 33; where, as we have seen, the promise to sit on the throne of David was fulfilled by Christ's sitting on the throne of God; and his reigning over the house of Jacob was spiritualised

into his reigning over the heavenly hosts. Why, then, should we not say from Rev. v. 10, that earth simply means heaven, and the saints reigning with Christ on the earth means, when taken spiritually, their reigning with him in heaven? In like manner we have seen that the Jews, so far as the promises are concerned, mean Christians; that the angel with the chain binding Satan is the church; that the epiphany of Christ (2 Thess. ii. 8) is the effusion of the Holy Spirit; that the destruction of Antichrist is his conversion; that the commission to preach the gospel to all nations ensures as a result that all nations shall believe the gospel; that Dan. vii. 13 was fulfilled in the ascension of Christ; and that the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian was the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven. If these various texts have yielded to the power of spiritualising, why should we make difficulties with Rev. v. 10? The book itself is mystical, and without any great violence the spiritual mind can transfer the reigning on earth to the reigning in heaven.

(3.) You are greatly mistaken, dear brother, if you suppose the spiritualising system is or ever was limited to the interpretation of the Bible. No; it extends to all systems, and has made, or is making, the round of all nations. The Jews spiritualised the coming of Christ in the flesh as we do his coming in the clouds, and therefore they rejected his mission. The heathen mythologies were foolish

and absurd when taken according to the letter, yet there lay in them all a deep and hidden significancy which the spiritualising mind is able to develope into many of the noblest and holiest principles of natural religion. Cicero has done this historically ; Horace has done it poetically ; and the late famous Welker in Bonn has done it philosophically in his " Doctrine of the Gods." The old rationalists of Germany spiritualised most of the miracles of the scripture, and all the great doctrines of orthodoxy without exception. Hegel, in the name of philosophy, declares that to require us to believe in the outward representations of the Old and New Testament is to destroy both faith and the church. He is a spiritualiser of the first water ; history, prophecy, signs, wonders, miracles, &c., all yield to the verifying (called also the spiritualising) faculty which extracts a few simple moralities from the mass, and leaves the remainder to the contemplation of the vulgar.

It is indeed a difficult problem to draw the right line between prophecy and history in the way of exposition ; for the rational infidel turns impudently upon us with the observation that he is only following our own example. He says, " You spiritualise a few chapters, I spiritualise a few more ; you are futurists in this respect, and I am both a futurist and a præterist ; you spiritualise the first resurrection, and I spiritualise the second. Are you the only people who have a right to spiritu-



alise the scriptures? By no means. The history is quite as capable of a deep spiritual sense as the prophecies, and so we are to take the Pentateuch generally, and a great part of the Old Testament. If the many passages which predict the return of the Jews to their former possessions can be spiritualised, so also can their bondage, their deliverance, their wanderings in the wilderness, the fiery and the cloudy pillar, the awful scenes connected with Mount Sinai, the rock of Horeb which yielded the spiritual water, the dividing the Jordan, the prodigies and miracles interwoven with the whole narrative, the strange capture of the city of Ai, the slaughter of the Canaanites, and many other similar strange and wonderful events. All these are to be taken in a spiritual mystical sense, and not according to the letter. They embody in a concrete form many beautiful truths, such as the unity of God, the evils of slavery, the necessity of divine superintendence, and several important moral principles. It is certainly easier to spiritualise the prodigies of the history than the glories promised to the Jews in the prophets. You (he maliciously observes) have given me the key which opens all the chambers of imagery, prophetic and historic, nor should you feel astonished if I use it more frequently than you do."

Indeed, dear brother, this principle of spiritualising plain documents has, in the last fifty years,

made prodigious progress; and is, I fear, sometimes carried a little too far. If we contemplate for a moment the present state of Christendom, we can see clearly enough the truth of this observation. Everywhere the old formularies, the liturgies, the hymnology, the articles of faith, the creeds and confessions of the Reformation, as well as the more ancient symbols of the church universal, are spiritualised into anything or nothing according to the fancy or faith of the subscribers. In the Roman Catholic church, which pretends to have permanency, and even infallibility, you find every variety of opinion, from absolute infidelity to the most idiotic superstition. The creeds remain as they were, but the spirit of the age has given them a new interpretation, and vast masses of the people are open and avowed infidels. One very intelligent Roman Catholic told me he was not ambitious enough to believe in the resurrection. And many of the most rational works sent forth by the press are from Roman Catholics. Renan and Schenkel may be taken as the types of the more advanced spiritualisers in the Popish and Protestant churches. They both deny inspiration, save in the sense in which Milton and Homer were inspired; they both deny prophecy and miracle altogether; they both venerate the holy scriptures, but explain them in a spiritual mystical sense, as we do the prophecies; they are both very popular writers, which shows how the old orthodox

systems are vanishing from the earth ; and they both positively deny that Christ rose from the dead, or that there is to be either a first or second resurrection, or any resurrection of the body at all. All resurrection is spiritual, and so is the advent of Christ and the future judgment. This you will admit is carrying our system of prophetic interpretation too far ; and it is certainly our duty to discover some barrier to restrain these audacious men who apply the principles of spiritualising to history as well as prophecy, to creeds and confessions as well as the holy scriptures.

This is especially necessary at the present time, when the burning question of a literal or spiritual resurrection is agitating all the churches of the continent. In France and Switzerland, in Belgium and Holland, in Germany and Austria, the battle rages fiercely, and the tremendous subject of debate is the resurrection of Christ—was His resurrection spiritual or literal? A very great body of learned men in all these churches deny the resurrection of the flesh. The resurrection of Christ is spiritual, the resurrection of the church (Rev. xx.) is spiritual, the resurrection of the wicked is spiritual, a literal resurrection of the body is not in Scripture ; and if it were, it could not reasonably be believed, as it is totally contrary to the established laws of nature. Such is the language of these men, and such the present state of Christendom, at least on the continent of Europe.

In England we are not so far advanced, but we are making way steadily. I can subscribe all the formularies of the established church, and hold and preach all the varieties of opinion between infidelity and high Calvinism. The thirty-nine articles are Calvinistic or Arminian, low church, or high church, Protestant, Puseyite, or even Popish, according as you apply the principle of spiritual interpretation. You may subscribe the Athanasian creed, and yet deny that Christ is the object of divine worship; you can swear to the doctrine of inspiration, and yet preach that the Pentateuch is a collection of fables; you can state to the parents that the children you have baptized are regenerated and made heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and yet deny the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; there is not one article or formula or dogma from which I cannot bring out the five senses of Origen, and thus I am at liberty to roam at large among the infinite varieties of belief, like a sentimental enthusiast in the midst of the varieties of natural scenery. Nothing stands in my way: show me the confession of faith; only tell me the creed, and I am ready to subscribe. My system of spiritualising carries me triumphantly over all impediments, and keeps my conscience void of offence. My veneration for the holy scriptures leads me to spiritualise the prophecies, and my veneration for the church leads me to spiritualise our creeds and confessions. By this means the

unity of the church is preserved, and the different tastes gratified with a great variety both of doctrine and ritual. In this way you see how extensive is the system of spiritualising, and also some of the consequences of carrying it too far.

(4.) And now, dear brother, having made a clean breast of it, let me conclude with some practical observations on the great subject of prophecy and spiritualising.

1. Let us hold fast this great principle which gives variety to the interpretation, liberty to the preacher, and preserves in our churches all possible shades of religious opinions. Remember that in the Roman Catholic church no one opinion is absolutely necessary save the belief in the headship of the pope. On this condition one pope offered to accept the English church, just as she is, into his paternal embrace; and on that condition the present pope would receive her to-morrow. Variety of sentiment cannot be prevented, and our spiritualising system makes variety legitimate, while the public creed remains unchanged.

2. But we must make the distinction fully and clearly between the fulfilled and the unfulfilled prophecies. The former have in general been fulfilled literally, as Dr. Keith and others have demonstrated; and the latter, especially those that refer to the Jewish promises (not the curses), to the latter-day glory, to the coming of Christ, and the first resurrection, are to be taken spiritually, to

agree with the traditions of the elders and give time for the Church to convert the world.

3. Do you not think it would be wise to keep men, as far as we can from the study of prophecy altogether? It is certain that the most of those who do study turn out Millenarians. It is incredible the number of books and pamphlets which during the last fifty years have issued from the press, either fully or partially advocating millenarian sentiments. At all events it would be well to warn ministers and people from the abstruse study of the Apocalypse (Rev. i. 3), for instead of receiving a blessing from it, they will be led into the dreamy mazes of Millenarianism.

4. I have observed that in mankind in general there is a sincere desire for some distinct and definite objects of hope. The Millenarians have fixed on the Advent as their hope, and it is incredible how tenaciously they hold to it and defend it. Some of their writers, among whom Edmund Irving was conspicuous, have surrounded the coming of Christ and the synchronous events with such a halo of glory, that even unbelievers are for a moment attracted by its splendour. Now, we too must have something to preach to the people as the believer's hope. And have we not the glorious expectation of laying these bodies in the grave—of being emancipated from the load of materialism which encumbers us, and taking our flight among the suns and stars? Do you not

desire to be unclothed? (1 Cor. v. 4.) Do you not every day in your prayers thank God that death is one day nearer, that the vital principle is burning low, and will soon be extinguished? Yes, death is our hope, and the more we preach this, the more lively, joyous, and victorious, will our people be. Besides, death has many advantages; such as that it is certain, it is universal, it is painful, it is the object of our senses, and the belief in it requires no effort of faith; whereas, the coming of Christ as to the time is uncertain, may be far distant, and does require an effort of faith. Let us then keep to death. It is sure and certain, while many of the hopes of the Millenarians may turn out to be mere fanatical delusions.

5. And here I would observe, further, that sobriety should mark our Christian hopes as well as our Christian character. You should warn your people earnestly against *waiting* for Christ; it will lead to fanaticism. I have never met any who were waiting for Christ, praying for his coming, making his coming the blessed hope of believers hastening unto the coming of the day of God, looking for the appearing of the Son of Man, who were not on the fair way to Millenarianism. This has been my experience, and therefore you should discourage all such practices among your people. Place death before them, but keep them from the folly and fanaticism of waiting for the Son of God from heaven (1 Thess. i. 10). His

coming, you know, is to terminate the human species, and to long for it shows a cruelty worse than Nero's, who only wished to extinguish the Roman people. Let us keep to death, then, and leave the hope of the Advent to the Millenarians.

6. It is also very important that you should have right conceptions concerning the Jews. I have always found that those who make a great work about the peculiar blessings promised to Israel, are on the straight road to the millennium, and all the doctrines connected with it. The Jerusalem of the prophets is the earthly Jerusalem; the splendid prophecies and promises given to Israel in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, they interpret, not of the Christian Church, but of Israel according to the flesh—the scattered and accursed nation on whom, for their sins, the wrath of God rests, and has rested for eighteen hundred years. In reading the scriptures, therefore, when you come to the words, Jerusalem, the Jews, Israel, Zion, to which any promise of blessing is attached, always add by way of explanation the phrase “that is, the Church,” that the people may clearly understand that Christians and not Jews are the subjects of the Old Testament promises. And remember this one fact, that if you admit the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, you must admit also that Jesus is to be their king. The restoration and the reign are connected with one another by an absolute logical necessity, so that



you must admit both or deny both. You should, therefore, deny often and strongly the restoration of the Jews to Palestine as a carnal and dangerous doctrine, leading to many unanticipated consequences. You may have some difficulty at first in applying to the revival of the Christian Church all the prophecies that speak of the restoration of Israel, but such difficulties will become less and less as the faculty of spiritualising becomes stronger; and I have little doubt you will at last be able to get through them all without any violent qualms of conscience.

It would help you greatly in this matter, and also serve to keep your conscience tender and pure, if you would frequently teach your congregation that the Jews are the people of the curse, and we Christians the people of the blessing; that all the threatenings belong to the former, and all the promises to the latter; and that the only destiny reserved for the scattered nation is to be absorbed in the Christian communities among which they dwell.

7. It may help to extinguish the pestilent practice of these fanatics in waiting, looking, and longing for the coming of Christ, if you can keep up against them the *odium theologicum*, as our brethren both in Britain and America have hitherto endeavoured to do. This may be effected in many ways. I have given a specimen in my first confession of the names, attributes, and

epithets which belong to them as heretics, enthusiasts, fanatics, visionaries, good pious expounders of the Apocalypse. To these you can add such other similar designations as may be appropriate to the individuals you oppose. I have known a good effect produced by signs. When you hear a Millenarian spoken of with respect,—it may be for science, as Newton and Napier,—or eloquence, as Chalmers and Irving,—or criticism, as Elliott and Alford,—you may yield a reluctant consent, at the same time putting the first finger of the right hand to your forehead, by which sign you express the sentiment that the dear brother is a genius, but very eccentric, perhaps a little *touched* ; or, as the Irish mathematicians say, his head wants a square of being round.

You can also occasionally assume a gentle patronising air, and speak of them as good, quiet enthusiasts, whom it would be a pity to persecute or awaken from their ecstasy by any great violence. Let them alone, and the fire will soon exhaust itself ; and leaving their longing for the coming of the day of Christ, they will return to the sentiments and occupations of the world. Ridicule may also be employed with propriety, if it is used with prudence, and is not overstrained, for then it loses its effect. You may speak of the horrid mixture of heavenly and earthly things in the millenarian system ; of the absurdity of glorified beings visiting this earth, much less reigning over it ; of

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the lowering of the majesty of Christ by connecting him with this earth for the long period of a thousand years, &c. But your own sound judgment will suggest the most effectual means of resisting these errors, so that I have said enough, and perhaps more than enough on this subject.

8. Finally, you should, while guarding and defending the great principle of spiritualising, endeavour by all means to prevent its being misapplied. There are always captious spirits who are ready to bolt every principle to the brack, and pervert to their own confusion the clearest principles of exegesis. You should therefore assert often and earnestly that the spiritualising system is to be applied only to the future, and not to the past or the present. It does not even include the whole future, but only the promises, for the threatenings are to be taken literally. It does not apply to the *histories*, for that would lead to Colensoism ; it does not apply to geography *generally*, but only to Canaan, Jerusalem, Zion, and the mountain of the Lord, when identified with Jewish blessings ; the Church is, of course, the heir of 'all the blessings promised to the Jews, but the curses remain untransferred. The principle of spiritualising is thus, like every other, limited to its proper objects ; and if it be removed from its natural sphere it works the utmost confusion. Keep this steadily before your people lest they interpret the whole in the natural, literal way, and then you have Millen-

arianism ; or perhaps interpret the whole spiritually, and then you have Rationalism, Colensoism, Materialism, and all forms of infidelity.

With these few words of warning and exhortation, I bid you farewell, hoping soon to hear from you again, when your mind may be more at ease as to the coming judgments. The old argument remains the same still, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the world" (1 Pet. iii. 4), and against it the enthusiasts who preach judgment and sudden destruction to the ungodly struggle in vain.

Again I say, farewell.



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